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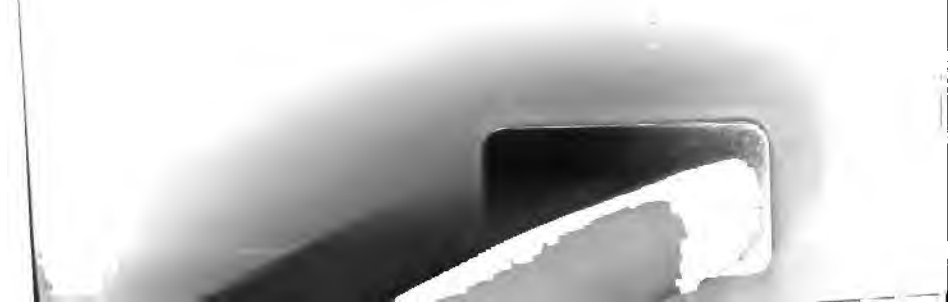

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RAVENSHOE

VOL. I.

RAVENSHOE.

BY HENRY KINGSLEY,

AUTHOR OF "GEOFFRY HAMLYN."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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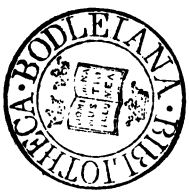

TO MY BROTHER,

CHARLES KINGSLEY,

I DEDICATE THIS TALE,

IN TOKEN OF A LOVE WHICH ONLY GROWS STRONGER

AS WE BOTH GET OLDER.

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RAVENSHOE.

CHAPTER I.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FAMILY OF RAVENSHOE.

I HAD intended to have gone into a family history of the Ravenshoes, from the time of Canute to that of her present Majesty, following it down through every change and revolution, both secular and religious; which would have been deeply interesting, but which would have taken more hard reading than one cares to undertake for nothing. I had meant, I say, to have been quite diffuse on the annals of one of our oldest commoner families; but, on going into the subject, I found I must either chronicle little affairs which ought to have been forgotten long ago, or do my work in a very patchy and inefficient way. When I say that the Ravenshoes have been engaged in every plot, rebellion, and civil war, from about a century or so before the Conquest to 1745, and that the history of the house is marked by cruelty and rapacity in old times, and in those more modern by political tergiversation of the blackest dye, the reader

will understand why I hesitate to say too much in reference to a name which I especially honour. In order, however, that I may give some idea of what the hereditary character of the familiar is, I must just lead the reader's eye lightly over some of the principal events of their history.

The great Irish families have, as is well known, a banshee, or familiar spirit, who, previous to misfortune or death, flits moaning round the ancestral castle. Now although the Ravenshoes, like all respectable houses, have an hereditary lawsuit; a feud, (with the Humbys, of Hele); a ghost (which the present Ravenshoe claims to have repeatedly seen in early youth); and a buried treasure: yet I have never heard that they had a banshee. Had such been the case, that unfortunate spirit would have had no sinecure of it, but rather must have kept howling night and day for nine hundred years or so, in order to have got through her work at all. For the Ravenshoes were almost always in trouble, and yet had a facility of getting out again, which, to one not aware of the cause, was sufficiently inexplicable. Like the Stuarts, they had always taken the losing side, and yet, unlike the Stuarts, have always kept their heads on their shoulders, and their house over their heads. Lady Ascot says that, if Ambrose Ravenshoe had been attainted in 1745, he'd have been hung as sure as fate: there was evidence enough against him to hang a dozen men. I myself, too, have heard Squire Densil declare, with great pride, that the

Ravenshoe of King John's time was the only Baron who did not sign Magna Charta; and, if there were a Ravenshoe at Runnymede, I have not the slightest doubt that such was the case. Through the Rose wars, again, they were always on the wrong side, whichever that might have been, because your Ravenshoe, mind you, was not bound to either side in those times, but changed as he fancied fortune was going. As your Ravenshoe was the sort of man who generally joined a party just when their success was indubitable—that is to say, just when the reaction against them was about to set in—he generally found himself among the party which was going down hill, who despised him for not joining them before, and opposed to the rising party, who hated him because he had declared against them. Which little game is common enough in this present century among some men of the world, who seem, as a general rule, to make as little by it as ever did the Ravenshoes.

Well, whatever your trimmers make by their motion now-a-days, the Ravenshoes were not successful either at liberal conservatism, or conservative liberalism. At the end of the reign of Henry VII. they were as poor as Job, or poorer. But, before you have time to think of it, behold, in 1530, there comes you to court a Sir Alured Ravenshoe, who incontinently begins cutting in at the top of the tune, swaggering, swearing, dressing, fighting, dicing, and all that sort of thing, and, what is more, paying his way in a manner which suggests

successful burglary as the only solution. Sir Alured, however, as I find, had done no worse than marry an old maid (Miss Hincksey, one of the Staffordshire Hincksеys) with a splendid fortune; which fortune set the family on its legs again for some generations. This Sir Alured seems to have been an audacious rogue. He made great interest with the king, who was so far pleased with his activity in athletic sports that he gave him a post in Ireland. There our Ravenshoe was so fascinated by the charming manners of the Earl of Kildare that he even accompanied that nobleman on a visit to Desmond; and, after a twelvemonth's unauthorized residence in the interior of Ireland, on his return to England he was put into the Tower for six months to "consider himself."

This Alured seems to have been a deuce of a fellow, a very good type of the family. When British Harry had that difference we wot of with the Bishop of Rome, I find Alured to have been engaged in some five or six Romish plots, such as, had the king been in possession of facts, would have consigned him to a rather speedy execution. However, the king seems to have looked on this gentleman with a suspicious eye, and to have been pretty well aware what sort of man he was, for I find him writing to his wife, on the occasion of his going to Court—"The King's Grace looked but sourly upon me, and said it should go hard, but that the pitcher which went so oft to the well should be broke at last. Thereto I making answer, 'that that should depend on the

pitcher, whether it were iron or clomb,' he turned on his heel, and presently departed from me."

He must have been possessed of his full share of family audacity to sharpen his wits on the terrible Harry, with such an unpardonable amount of treason hanging over him. I have dwelt thus long on him, as he seems to have possessed a fair share of the virtues and vices of his family—a family always generous and brave, yet always led astray by bad advisers. This Alured built Ravenshoe House, as it stands to this day, and in which much of the scene of this story is laid.

They seem to have got through the Gunpowder Plot pretty well, though I can show you the closet where one of the minor conspirators, one Watson, lay *perdu* for a week or so after that gallant attempt, more I suspect from the effect of a guilty conscience than any thing else, for I never heard of any distinct charge being brought against him. The Forty-five, however, did not pass quite so easily, and Ambrose Ravenshoe went as near to lose his head as any one of the family since the Conquest. When the news came from the north about the alarming advance of the Highlanders, it immediately struck Ambrose that this was the best opportunity for making a fool of himself that could possibly occur. He accordingly, without hesitation or consultation with any mortal soul, rang the bell for his butler, sent for his stud-groom, mounted every man about the place (twenty or so), armed them, grooms, gardeners, and all, with crossbows and partizans from

the armoury, and rode into the cross, at Stonnington, on a market day, and boldly proclaimed the Pretender king. It soon got about that "the Squire" was making a fool of himself, and that there was some fun going; so he shortly found himself surrounded by a large and somewhat dirty rabble, who, with cries of "Well done, old rebel!" and "Hurrah for the Pope!" escorted him, his terror-stricken butler and his shame-stricken grooms, to the Crown and Sceptre. As good luck would have it, there happened to be in the town that day no less a person than Lord Segur, the leading Roman Catholic nobleman of the county. He, accompanied by several of the leading gentlemen of the same persuasion, burst into the room where the Squire sat, overpowered him, and, putting him bound into a coach, carried him off to Segur Castle, and locked him up. It took all the strength of the Popish party to save him from attainder. The Church rallied right bravely round the old house, which had always assisted her with sword and purse, and never once had wavered in its allegiance. So, while nobler heads went down, Ambrose Ravenshoe's remained on his shoulders.

Ambrose died in 1759.

John (Monseigneur) in 1771.

Howard in 1800. He first took the Claycomb hounds.

Petre in 1820. He married Alicia, only daughter of Charles, third Earl of Ascot, and was succeeded by Densil, the first of our dramatis personæ—the first of

all this shadowy line that we shall see in the flesh. He was born in the year 1783, and married, first in 1812, at his father's desire, a Miss Winkleigh, of whom I know nothing; and second, at his own desire, in 1823, Susan, fourth daughter of Lawrence Petersham, Esq., of Fairford Grange, county Worcester, by whom he had issue—

Cuthbert, born 1826.

Charles, born 1831.

Densil was an only son. His father, a handsome, careless, good-humoured, but weak and superstitious man, was entirely in the hands of the priests, who during his life were undisputed masters of Ravenshoe. Lady Alicia was, as I have said, a daughter of Lord Ascot, a Staunton, as staunchly Protestant a house as any in England. She, however, managed to fall in love with the handsome young Popish Squire, and to elope with him, changing not only her name, but, to the dismay of her family, her faith also, and becoming, pervert-like, more actively bigoted than her easy-going husband. She brought little or no money into the family; and, from her portrait, appears to have been exceedingly pretty, and monstrously silly.

To this strong-minded couple was born, two years after their marriage, a son, who was called Densil.

This young gentleman seems to have got on much like other young gentlemen till the age of twenty-one, when it was determined by the higher powers in conclave assembled that he should go to London and see

the world; and so, having been cautioned duly how to avoid the flesh and the devil, to see the world he went. In a short time intelligence came to the confessor of the family, and through him to the father and mother, that Densil was seeing the world with a vengeance; that he was the constant companion of the Right Honourable Viscount Saltire, the great dandy of the Radical Atheist set, with whom no man might play picquet and live; that he had been upset in a tilbury with Mademoiselle Vaurien of Drury-lane at Kensington turnpike; that he had fought the French *émigré*, a Comte De Hautenbas, apropos of the Vaurien afore-mentioned—in short, that he was going on at a deuce of a rate: and so a hurried council was called to deliberate what was to be done.

"He will lose his immortal soul," said the priest.

"He will dissipate his property," said his mother.

"He will go to the devil," said his father.

So Father Clifford, good man, was despatched to London, with post horses, and ordered to bring back the lost sheep *vi et armis*. Accordingly, at ten o'clock one night, Densil's lad was astounded by having to admit Father Clifford, who demanded immediately to be led to his master.

Now this was awkward, for James well knew what was going on upstairs; but he knew also what would happen sooner or later to a Ravenshoe servant who trifled with the priest, and so he led the way.

The lost sheep which the good father had come to

find was not exactly sober this evening, and certainly not in a very good temper. He was playing *écarté* with a singularly handsome, though supercilious-looking man, dressed in the height of fashion, who, judging from the heap of gold beside him, had been winning heavily. The priest trembled and crossed himself—this man was the terrible, handsome, wicked, witty, Atheistical, radical Lord Saltire, whose tongue no woman could withstand, and whose pistol no man dared face; who was currently believed to have sold himself to the deuce, or, indeed, as some said, to be the deuce himself.

A more cunning man than poor simple Father Clifford would have made some common-place remark and withdrawn, after a short greeting, taking warning by the impatient scowl that settled on Densil's handsome face. Not so he. To be defied by the boy whose law had been his word for ten years past never entered into his head, and he sternly advanced towards the pair.

Densil inquired if anything were the matter at home. And Lord Saltire, anticipating a scene, threw himself back in his chair, stretched out his elegant legs, and looked on with the air of a man who knows he is going to be amused, and composes himself thoroughly to appreciate the entertainment.

"Thus much, my son," said the priest; "your mother is wearing out the stones of the oratory with her knees, praying for her first-born, while he is wasting his substance, and perilling his soul, with debauched Atheistic companions, the enemies of God and man."

Lord Saltire smiled sweetly, bowed elegantly, and took snuff.

"Why do you intrude into my room and insult my guests?" said Densil, casting an angry glance at the priest, who stood calmly like a black pillar, with his hands folded before him. "It is unendurable."

"*Quem Deus vult*," &c. Father Clifford had seen that scowl once or twice before, but he would not take warning. He said—

"I am ordered not to go westward without you. I command you to come."

"Command me! command a Ravenshoe!" said Densil, furiously.

Father Clifford, by way of mending matters, now began to lose *his* temper.

"You would not be the first Ravenshoe who has been commanded by a priest; ay, and has had to obey too," said he.

"And you will not be the first jack-priest who has felt the weight of a Ravenshoe's wrath," replied Densil, brutally.

Lord Saltire leant back, and said to the ambient air, "I'll back the priest, five twenties to one."

This was too much. Densil would have liked to quarrel with Saltire, but that was death—he was the deadest shot in Europe. He grew furious, and beyond all control. He told the priest to go to (further than purgatory); grew blasphemous, emphatically renouncing the creed of his forefathers, and, in fact, all other

creeds. The priest grew hot and furious too, retaliated in no measured terms, and finally left the room with his ears stopped, shaking the dust off his feet as he went. Then Lord Saltire drew up to the table again, laughing.

"Your estates are entailed, Ravenshoe, I suppose?" said he.

"No."

"Oh! It's your deal, my dear fellow."

Densil got an angry letter from his father in a few days, demanding full apologies and recantations, and an immediate return home. Densil had no apologies to make, and did not intend to return till the end of the season. His father wrote, declining the honour of his further acquaintance, and sending him a draft for fifty pounds to pay his outstanding bills, which he very well knew amounted to several thousands. In a short time the great Catholic tradesmen, with whom he had been dealing, began to press for money in a somewhat insolent way; and now Densil began to see that, by defying and insulting the faith and the party to which he belonged, he had merely cut himself off from rank, wealth, and position. He had defied the *partie prêtre*, and had yet to feel their power. In two months he was in the Fleet prison.

His servant (the title "tiger" came in long after this), a half groom, half valet, such as men kept in those days—a simple lad from Ravenshoe, James Horton by name—for the first time in his life disobeyed orders;

for, on being told to return home by Densil, he firmly declined doing so, and carried his top boots and white neckcloth triumphantly into the Fleet, there pursuing his usual avocations with the utmost nonchalance.

"A very distinguished fellow that of yours, Curly" (they all had nicknames for one another in those days), said Lord Saltire. "If I were not Saltire, I think I would be Jim. To own the only clean face among six hundred fellow-creatures is a pre-eminence, a decided pre-eminence. I'll buy him of you."

For Lord Saltire came to see him, snuff-box and all. That morning Densil was sitting brooding in the dirty room with the barred windows, and thinking what a wild free wind would be sweeping across the Downs this fine November day, when the door was opened, and in walks me my lord, with a sweet smile on his face.

He was dressed in the extreme of fashion—a long-tailed blue coat with gold buttons, a frill to his shirt, a white cravat, a wonderful short waistcoat, loose short nankeen trousers, low shoes, no gaiters, and a low-crowned hat. I am pretty correct, for I have seen his picture, dated 1804. But you must please to remember that his lordship was in the very van of the fashion, and that probably such a dress was not universal for two or three years afterwards. I wonder if his well-known audacity would be sufficient to make him walk along one of the public thoroughfares in such a dress, to-morrow, for a heavy bet—I fancy not.

He smiled sardonically—"My dear fellow," he said, "when a man comes on a visit of condolence, I know it is the most wretched taste to say, 'I told you so;' but do me the justice to allow that I offered to back the priest five to one. I had been coming to you all the week, but Tuesday and Wednesday I was at Newmarket; Thursday I was shooting at your cousin Ascot's; yesterday I did not care about boring myself with you; so I have come to-day because I was at leisure and had nothing better to do."

Densil looked up savagely, thinking he had come to insult him; but the kindly compassionate look in the piercing grey eye belied the cynical curl of the mouth, and disarmed him. He leant his head upon the table, and sobbed.

Lord Saltire laid his hand kindly on his shoulder, and said—

"You have been a fool, Ravenshoe; you have denied the faith of your forefathers. Pardieu, if I had such an article, I would not have thrown it so lightly away."

"*You* talk like this? Who next? It was your conversation led me to it. Am I worse than you? What faith have you, in God's name?"

"The faith of a French Lycée, my friend; the only one I ever had. I have been sufficiently consistent to that, I think."

"Consistent, indeed," groaned poor Densil.

"Now, look here," said Saltire; "I may have been to blame in this. But I give you my honour,

I had no more idea that you would be obstinate enough to bring matters to this pass, than I had that you would burn down Ravenshoe House because I laughed at it for being old-fashioned. Go home, my poor little Catholic pipkin, and don't try to swim with iron pots like Wrekin and me. Make submission to that singularly *distingué*-looking old turkey-cock of a priest, kiss your mother, and get your usual autumn's hunting and shooting."

"Too late! too late, now!" sobbed Densil.

"Not at all, my dear fellow," said Saltire, taking a pinch of snuff; "the partridges will be a little wild of course—that you must expect; but you ought to get some very pretty pheasant and cock-shooting. Come, say yes. Have your debts paid, and get out of this infernal hole. A week of this would tame the devil, I should think."

"If you think you could do anything for me, Saltire."

Lord Saltire immediately retired, and reappeared, leading in a lady by her hand. She raised the veil from her head, and he saw his mother. In a moment she was crying on his neck; and, as he looked over her shoulder, he saw a blue coat passing out of the door, and that was the last of Lord Saltire for the present.

It was no part of the game of the priests to give Densil a cold welcome home. Twenty smiling faces were grouped in the porch to welcome him back; and among them all none smiled more brightly than the old priest and his father. The dogs went wild with joy, and

his favourite peregrine scolded on the falconer's wrist, and struggled with her jesses, shrilly reminding him of the merry old days by the dreary salt marsh, or the lonely lake.

The past was never once alluded to in any way by any one in the house. Only Squire Petre shook hands with faithful James, and gave him a watch, ordering him to ride a certain colt next day, and see how well forward he could get him. So next day they drew the home covers, and the fox, brave fellow, ran out to Parkside, making for the granite walls of Hessitor. And, when Densil felt his nostrils filled once more by the free rushing mountain air, he shouted aloud for joy, and James's voice along side of him said—

"This is better than the Fleet, sir."

And so Densil played a single-wicket match with the Holy Church, and, like a great many other people, got bowled out in the first innings. He returned to his allegiance in the most exemplary manner, and settled down into the most humdrum of young country gentlemen. He did exactly what every one else about him did. He was not naturally a profligate or vicious man; but there was a wild devil of animal passion in him, which had broken out in London, and which was now quieted by dread of consequences, but which he felt and knew was there, and might break out again. He was a changed man. There was a gulf between him and the life he had led before he went to London. He had tasted of liberty (or rather, not to profane that Divine

word, of licentiousness), and yet not drunk long enough to make him weary of the draught. He had heard the dogmas he was brought up to believe infallible turned to unutterable ridicule by men like Saltire and Wrekin; men who, as he had the wit to see, were a thousand times cleverer and better informed than Father Clifford or Father Dennis. In short, he had found out, as a great many others have, that Popery won't hold water, and so, as a *pis aller*, he adopted Saltire's creed—that religion was necessary for the government of States, that one religion was as good as another, and that, *cæteris paribus*, the best religion was the one which secured the possessor 10,000*l.* a year; and therefore Densil was a devout Catholic.

It was thought by the allied powers that he ought to marry. He had no objection, and so he married a young lady, a Miss Winkleigh—Catholic, of course—about whom I can get no information whatever. Lady Ascot says that she was a pale girl, with about as much air as a milkmaid; on which two facts I can build no theory as to her personal character. She died in 1816, childless; and in 1820 Densil lost both his father and mother, and found himself, at the age of thirty-seven, master of Ravenshoe, and master of himself.

He felt the loss of the old folks most keenly, more keenly than that of his wife. He seemed without a stay or holdfast in the world, for he was a poorly-educated man, without resources; and so he went on moping and brooding until good old Father Clifford, who loved him

dearly, got alarmed, and recommended travels. He recommended Rome, the cradle of the faith, and to Rome he went.

He stayed in Rome a year; at the end of which time he appeared suddenly at home with a beautiful young wife on his arm. As Father Clifford, trembling and astonished, advanced to lay his hand upon her head, she drew up, laughed, and said, "Spare yourself the trouble, my dear sir; I am a Protestant."

I have had to tell you all this, in order to show you how it came about that Densil, though a Papist, bethought of marrying a Protestant wife to keep up a balance of power in his house. For, if he had not married this lady, the hero of this book would never have been born; and this greater proposition contains the less, "that, if he had never been born, his history would never have been written, and so this book would have had no existence."

CHAPTER II.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO THE FOREGOING.

THE second Mrs. Ravenshoe was the handsome dowerless daughter of a Worcester squire, of good standing, who, being blessed with an extravagant son, and six handsome daughters, had lived for several years abroad, finding society more accessible, and, consequently, the matrimonial chances of the "Petersham girls" proportionately greater than in England. She was a handsome, proud woman, not particularly clever, or particularly agreeable, or particularly anything, except particularly self-possessed. She had been long enough looking after an establishment to know thoroughly the value of one, and had seen quite enough of good houses to know that a house without a mistress was no house at all. Accordingly, in a very few days the house felt her presence, submitted with the best grace to her not unkindly rule, and in a week they all felt as if she had been there for years.

Father Clifford, who longed only for peace, and was getting very old, got very fond of her, heretic as she was. She, too, liked the handsome, gentlemanly old man, and made herself agreeable to him, as a woman of

the world knows so well how to do. Father Mackworth, on the other hand, his young coadjutor since Father Dennis's death, an importation of Lady Alicia's from Rome, very soon fell under her displeasure. The first Sunday after her arrival, she drove to church, and occupied the great old family pew, to the immense astonishment of the rustics, and, after afternoon service, caught up the old vicar in her imperious off-hand way, and, will he nil he, carried him off to dinner—at which meal he was horrified to find himself sitting with two shaven priests, who talked Latin and crossed themselves. His embarrassment was greatly increased by the behaviour of Mrs. Ravenshoe, who admired his sermon, and spoke on doctrinal points with him as though there were not a priest within a mile. Father Mackworth was imprudent enough to begin talking at him, and at last said something unmistakably impertinent; upon which Mrs. Ravenshoe put her glass in her eye, and favoured him with such a glance of haughty astonishment as silenced him at once.

This was the beginning of hostilities between them, if one can give the name of hostilities to a series of infinitesimal annoyances on the one side, and to unmeasurable and barely concealed contempt on the other. Mackworth, on the one hand, knew that she understood and despised him, and he hated her. She, on the other hand, knew that he knew it, but thought him too much below her to notice, save now and then that she might put down with a high hand any, even the most distant,

approach to a tangible impertinence. But she was no match for him in the arts of petty, delicate, galling annoyances. There he was her master; he had been brought up in a good school for that, and had learnt his lesson kindly. He found out that she disliked his presence, and shrunk from his smooth, lean face with unutterable dislike. From that moment he was always in her way, overwhelming her with oily politeness, rushing across the room to pick up anything she had dropped, or to open the door, till it required the greatest restraint to avoid breaking through all forms of politeness, and bidding him begone. But why should we go on detailing trifles like these, which in themselves are nothing, but accumulated, are unbearable?

So it went on, till one morning, about two years after the marriage, Mackworth appeared in Clifford's room, and, yawning, threw himself into a chair.

"Benedicite," said Father Clifford, who never neglected religious etiquette on any occasion.

Mackworth stretched out his legs and yawned, rather rudely, and then relapsed into silence. Father Clifford went on reading. At last Mackworth spoke.

"I'll tell you what, my good friend, I am getting sick of this; I shall go back to Rome."

"To Rome?"

"Yes, back to Rome," repeated the other impertinently, for he always treated the good old priest with contemptuous insolence when they were alone. "What is the use of staying here, fighting that woman? There

is no more chance of turning her than a rock, and there is going to be no family."

"You think so?" said Clifford.

"Good heavens, does it look like it? Two years, and not a sign; besides, should I talk of going, if I thought so? *Then* there would be a career worthy of me; then I should have a chance of deserving well of the Church, by keeping a wavering family in her bosom. And I could do it, too: every child would be a fresh weapon in my hands against that woman. Clifford, do you think that Ravenshoe is safe?"

He said this so abruptly that Clifford coloured and started. Mackworth at the same time turned suddenly upon him, and scrutinized his face keenly.

"Safe!" said the old man; "what makes you fear otherwise?"

"Nothing special," said Mackworth; "only I have never been easy since you told me of that London escapade years ago."

"He has been very devout ever since," said Clifford. "I fear nothing."

"Humph! Well, I am glad to hear it," said Mackworth. "I shall go to Rome. I'd sooner be gossiping with Alphonse and Pierre in the cloisters than vegetating here. My talents are thrown away."

He departed down the winding steps of the priests' turret, which led to the flower garden. The day was fine, and a pleasant seat a short distance off invited him to sit. He could get a book he knew from the drawing-

room and sit there. So, with habitually noiseless tread, he passed along the dark corridor, and opened the drawing-room door.

Nobody was there. The book he wanted was in the little drawing-room beyond, separated from the room he was in by a partly-drawn curtain. The priest advanced silently over the deep piled carpet and looked in.

The summer sunlight, struggling through a waving bower of climbing plants and the small panes of a deeply mullioned window, fell upon two persons, at the sight of whom he paused, and, holding his breath, stood, like a black statue in the gloomy room, wrapped in astonishment.

He had never in his life heard these twain use any words beyond those of common courtesy towards one another; he had thought them the most indifferent, the coldest pair, he had ever seen. But now! now, the haughty beauty was bending from her chair over her husband, who sat on a stool at her feet; her arm was round his neck, and her hand was in his; and, as he looked, she parted the clustering black curls from his forehead and kissed him.

He bent forward and listened more eagerly. He could hear the surf on the shore, the sea-birds on the cliffs, the nightingale in the wood; they fell upon his ear, but he could not distinguish them; he waited only for one of the two figures before him to speak.

At last Mrs. Ravenshoe broke silence, but in so low a voice that even he, whose attention was

strained to the uttermost, could barely catch what she said.

"I yield, my love," said she; "I give you this one, but mind, the rest are mine. I have your solemn promise for that?"

"My solemn promise," said Densil, and kissed her again.

"My dear," she resumed, "I wish you could get rid of that priest, that Mackworth. He is irksome to me."

"He was recommended to my especial care by my mother," was Densil's reply. "If you could let him stay I should much rather."

"Oh, let him stay!" said she; "he is too contemptible for me to annoy myself about. But I distrust him, Densil. He has a lowering look sometimes."

"He is talented and agreeable," said Densil; "but I never liked him."

The listener turned to go, having heard enough, but was arrested by her continuing—

"By the bye, my love, do you know that that impudent girl Norah has been secretly married this three months?"

The priest listened more intently than ever.

"Who to?" asked Densil.

"To James, your keeper."

"I am glad of that. That lad James stuck to me in prison, Susan, when they all left me. She is a fine faithful creature, too. Mind you give her a good scolding."

Mackworth had heard enough apparently, for he stole gently away through the gloomy room, and walked musingly upstairs to Father Clifford.

That excellent old man took up the conversation just where it had left off.

"And when," said he, "my brother, do you propose returning to Rome?"

"I shall not go to Rome at all," was the satisfactory reply, followed by a deep silence.

In a few months, much to Father Clifford's joy and surprise, Mrs. Ravenshoe bore a noble boy, which was named Cuthbert. Cuthbert was brought up in the Romish faith, and at five years old had just begun to learn his prayers of Father Clifford, when an event occurred equally unexpected by all parties. Mrs. Ravenshoe was again found to be in a condition to make an addition to her family.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH OUR HERO'S TROUBLES BEGIN.

If you were a lazy yachtsman, sliding on a summer's day, before a gentle easterly breeze, over the long swell from the Atlantic, past the south-westerly shores of the Bristol Channel, you would find, after sailing all day beneath shoreless headlands of black slate, that the land suddenly fell away and sunk down, leaving, instead of beetling cliffs, a lovely amphitheatre of hanging wood and lawn, fronted by a beach of yellow sand—a pleasing contrast to the white surf and dark crag to which your eye had got accustomed.

This beautiful semicircular basin is about two miles in diameter, surrounded by hills on all sides, save that which is open to the sea. East and west the headlands stretch out a mile or more, forming a fine bay open to the north; while behind, landward, the downs roll up above the woodlands, a bare expanse of grass and grey stone. Half way along the sandy beach, a trout-stream comes foaming out of a dark wood, and finds its way across the shore in fifty sparkling channels; and the eye, caught by the silver thread of water, is snatched away above and beyond it, along a wooded glen, the

cradle of the stream, which pierces the country landward for a mile or two, till the misty vista is abruptly barred by a steep blue hill, which crosses the valley at right angles. A pretty little village stands at the mouth of the stream, and straggles with charming irregularity along the shore for a considerable distance westward; while behind, some little distance up the glen, a handsome church tower rises from among the trees. There are some fishing boats at anchor, there are some small boats on the beach, there is a coasting schooner beached and discharging coal, there are some fishermen lounging, there are some nets drying, there are some boys bathing, there are two grooms exercising four handsome horses; but it is not upon horses, men, boats, ship, village, church, or stream, that you will find your eye resting, but upon a noble, turreted, deep-porched, grey stone mansion, that stands on the opposite side of the stream, about a hundred feet above the village.

On the east bank of the little river, just where it joins the sea, abrupt lawns of grass and fern, beautifully broken by groups of birch and oak, rise above the dark woodlands, at the culminating point of which, on a buttress which runs down from the higher hills behind, stands the house I speak of, the north front looking on the sea, and the west on the wooded glen before mentioned—the house on a ridge dividing the two. Immediately behind again the dark woodlands begin once more, and above them is the moor.

The house itself is of grey stone, built in the time of

Henry VIII. The façade is exceedingly noble, though irregular; the most striking feature in the north or sea front being a large dark porch, open on three sides, forming the basement of a high stone tower, which occupies the centre of the building. At the north-west corner (that towards the village) rises another tower of equal height; and behind, above the irregular groups of chimneys, the more modern cupola of the stables shows itself as the highest point of all, and gives, combined with the other towers, a charming air of irregularity to the whole. The windows are mostly long, low, and heavily mullioned, and the walls are battlemented.

On approaching the house, you find that it is built very much after the fashion of a college, with a quadrangle in the centre. Two sides of this, the north and west, are occupied by the house, the south by the stables, and the east by a long and somewhat handsome chapel, of greater antiquity than the rest of the house. The centre of this quad, in place of the trim grass-plat, is occupied by a tan lunging ring, in the middle of which stands a granite basin filled with crystal water from the hills. In front of the west wing, a terraced flower-garden goes step by step towards the stream, till the smooth-shaven lawns almost mingle with the wild ferny heather turf of the park, where the dappled deer browse, and the rabbit runs to and fro busily. On the north, towards the sea, there are no gardens; but a noble gravel terrace, divided from the park only by a deep rampart, runs along beneath the windows; and to the

east the deer-park stretches away till lawn and glade are swallowed up in the encroaching woodland.

Such is Ravenshoe Hall at the present day, and such it was on the 10th of June, 1831 (I like to be particular), as regards the still life of the place; but, if one had then regarded the living inhabitants, one would have seen signs of an unusual agitation. Round the kitchen door stood a group of female servants talking eagerly together; and, at the other side of the court, some half-dozen grooms and helpers were evidently busy on the same theme, till the appearance of the stud-groom entering the yard suddenly dispersed them right and left; to do nothing with superabundant energy.

To them also entered a lean, quiet-looking man, aged at this time fifty-two. We have seen him before. He was our old friend Jim, who had attended Densil in the Fleet prison in old times. He had some time before this married a beautiful Irish Catholic waiting-maid of Lady Alicia's, by whom he had a daughter, now five years old, and a son aged one week. He walked across the yard to where the women were talking, and addressed them.

"How is my lady to-night?" said he.

"Holy Mother of God!" said a weeping Irish housemaid, "she's worse."

"How's the young master?"

"Hearty, a darling; crying his little eyes out, he is, a-bless him."

"He'll be bigger than Master Cuthbert, I'll warrant ye," said a portly cook.

"When was he born?" asked James.

"Nigh on two hours," said the other speaker.

At this conjuncture a groom came running through the passage, putting a note in his hat as he went; he came to the stud-groom, and said hurriedly, "A note for Dr. Marcy, at Lanceston, sir. What horse am I to take?"

"Trumpeter. How is my lady?"

"Going, as far as I can gather, sir."

James waited until he heard him dash full speed out of the yard, and then till he saw him disappear like a speck along the mountain road far aloft; then he went into the house, and, getting as near to the sick room as he dared, waited quietly on the stairs.

It was a house of woe, indeed! Two hours before, one feeble, wailing little creature had taken up his burthen, and begun his weary pilgrimage across the unknown desolate land that lay between him and the grave—for a part of which you and I are to accompany him; while his mother even now was preparing for her rest, yet striving for the child's sake to lengthen the last few weary steps of her journey, that they two might walk, were it never so short a distance, together.

The room was very still. Faintly the pure scents and sounds stole into the chamber of death from the blessed summer air without; gently came the murmur of the surf upon the sands; fainter and still fainter came the breath of the dying mother. The babe lay beside her

and her arm was round its body. The old vicar knelt by the bed, and Densil stood with folded arms and bowed head, watching the face which had grown so dear to him, till the light should die out from it for ever. Only those four in the chamber of death!

The sighing grew louder, and the eye grew once more animated. She reached out her hand, and, taking one of the vicar's, laid it upon the baby's head. Then she looked at Densil, who was now leaning over her, and with a great effort spoke.

"Densil, dear, you will remember your promise?"

"I will swear it, my love."

A few more laboured sighs, and a greater effort: "Swear it to me, love."

He swore that he would respect the promise he had made, so help him God!

The eyes were fixed now, and all was still. Then there was a long sigh; then there was a long silence; then the vicar rose from his knees and looked at Densil. There were but three in the chamber now.

* * * * *

Densil passed through the weeping women, and went straight to his own study. There he sat down, tearless, musing much about her who was gone.

How he had grown to love that woman, he thought—her that he had married for her beauty and her pride, and had thought so cold and hard! He remembered how the love of her had grown stronger, year by year, since their first child was born. How he had respected her

for her firmness and consistency; and how often, he thought, had he sheltered his weakness behind her strength! His right hand was gone, and he was left alone to do battle by himself!

One thing was certain. Happen what would, his promise should be respected, and this last boy, just born, should be brought up a Protestant as his mother had wished. He knew the opposition he would have from Father Mackworth, and determined to brave it. And, as the name of that man came into his mind, some of his old fierce, savage nature broke out again, and he almost cursed him aloud.

"I hate that fellow! I should like to defy him, and let him do his worst. I'd do it, now she's gone, if it wasn't for the boys. No, hang it, it wouldn't do. If I'd told him under seal of confession, instead of letting him grub it out, he couldn't have hung it over me like this. I wish he was—"

If Father Mackworth had had the slightest inkling of the state of mind of his worthy patron towards him, it is very certain that he would not have chosen that very moment to rap at the door. The most acute of us make a mistake sometimes; and he, haunted with vague suspicions since the conversation he had overheard in the drawing-room before the birth of Cuthbert, grew impatient, and determined to solve his doubts at once, and, as we have seen, selected the singularly happy moment when poor passionate Densil was cursing him to his heart's content.

"Brother, I am come to comfort you," he said, opening the door before Densil had time, either to finish the sentence written above, or to say "Come in." "This is a heavy affliction, and the heavier because—"

"Go away," said Densil, pointing to the door.

"Nay, nay," said the priest, "hear me—"

"Go away," said Densil, in a louder tone. "Do you hear me? I want to be alone, and I mean to be. Go!"

How recklessly defiant weak men get when they are once fairly in a rage! Densil, who was in general civilly afraid of this man, would have defied fifty such as he now.

"There is one thing, Mr. Ravenshoe," said the priest, in a very different tone, "about which I feel it my duty to speak to you, in spite of the somewhat unreasonable form your grief has assumed. I wish to know what you mean to call your son."

"Why?"

"Because he is ailing, and I wish to baptise him."

"You will do nothing of the kind, sir," said Densil, as red as a turkey-cock. "He will be baptised in proper time in the parish church. He is to be brought up a Protestant."

The priest looked steadily at Densil, who, now brought fairly to bay, was bent on behaving like a valiant man, and said slowly—

"So my suspicions are confirmed, then, and you have determined to hand over your son to eternal perdition"

(he didn't say perdition, he used a stronger word, which we will dispense with, if you have no objection).

"Perdition, sir!" bawled Densil; "how dare you talk of a son of mine in that free-and-easy sort of way? Why, what my family has done for the Church ought to keep a dozen generations of Ravenshoes from a possibility of perdition, sir. Don't tell me."

This new and astounding theory of justification by works, which poor Densil had broached in his wrath, was overheard by a round-faced, bright-eyed, curly-headed man about fifty, who entered the room suddenly, followed by James. For one instant you might have seen a smile of intense amusement pass over his merry face; but in an instant it was gone again, and he gravely addressed Densil.

"My dear Mr. Ravenshoe, I must use my authority as doctor, to request that your son's spiritual welfare should for the present yield to his temporal necessities. You must have a wet-nurse, my good sir."

Densil's brow had grown placid in a moment beneath the doctor's kindly glance. "God bless me," he said, "I never thought of it. Poor little lad! poor little lad!"

"I hope, sir," said James, "that you will let Norah have the young master. She has set her heart upon it."

"I have seen Mrs. Horton," said the doctor, "and I quite approve of the proposal. I think it, indeed, a most special providence that she should be able to undertake it. Had it been otherwise, we might have been undone."

"Let us go at once," said the impetuous Densil. "Where is the nurse? where is the boy?" And, so saying, he hurried out of the room, followed by the doctor and James.

Mackworth stood alone, looking out of the window, silent. He stood so long that one who watched him peered from his hiding-place more than once to see if he were gone. At length he raised his arm and struck his clenched hand against the rough granite window-sill so hard that he brought blood. Then he moodily left the room.

As soon as the room was quiet, a child about five years old crept stealthily from a dark corner where he had laid hidden, and with a look of mingled shyness and curiosity on his face, departed quietly by another door.

Meanwhile, Densil, James, and the doctor, accompanied by the nurse and baby, were holding their way across the court-yard towards a cottage which lay in the wood beyond the stables. James opened the door, and they passed into the inner room.

A beautiful woman was sitting propped up by pillows, nursing a week-old child. The sunlight, admitted by a half-open shutter, fell upon her, lighting up her delicate features, her pale pure complexion, and bringing a strange sheen on her long loose black hair. Her face was bent down gazing on the child which lay on her breast, and at the entrance of the party she looked up, and displayed a large lustrous dark blue eye, which lighted up with

infinite tenderness as Densil, taking the wailing boy from the nurse, placed it on her arm beside the other.

"Take care of that for me, Norah," said Densil. "It has no mother but you, now."

"Acushla ma chree," she answered, "bless my little bird. Come to your nest, alanna, come to your pretty brother, my darlin'."

The child's wailing was stilled now, and the doctor remarked, and remembered long afterwards, that the little waxen fingers, clutching uneasily about, came in contact with the little hand of the other child, and paused there. At this moment, a beautiful little girl, about five years old, got on the bed and nestled her peachy cheek against her mother's. As they went out, he turned and looked at the beautiful group once more, and then he followed Densil back to the house of mourning.

Reader, before we have done with those three innocent little faces, we shall see them distorted and changed by many passions, and shall meet them in many strange places. Come, take my hand, and we will follow them on to the end.

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER MACKWORTH.

I HAVE noticed that the sayings and doings of young gentlemen before they come to the age of, say seven or eight, are hardly interesting to any but their immediate relations and friends. I have my eye, at this moment, on a young gentleman of the mature age of two, the instances of whose sagacity and eloquence are of greater importance, and certainly more pleasant, to me, than the projects of Napoleon, or the orations of Bright. And yet I fear that even his most brilliant joke, if committed to paper, would fall dead upon the public ear; and so for the present I shall leave Charles Ravenshoe to the care of Norah, and pass on to some others who demand our attention more.

The first thing which John Mackworth remembered was his being left in the *loge* of a French school at Rouen by an English footman. Trying to push back his memory farther, he always failed to conjure up any previous recollection to that. He had certainly a very indistinct one of having been happier, and having lived quietly in pleasant country places with a kind woman who talked English; but his first decided im-

pression always remained the same—that of being at six years old, left friendless, alone, among twenty or thirty French boys older than himself.

His was a cruel fate. He would have been happier apprenticed to a collier. If the man who sent him there had wished to inflict the heaviest conceivable punishment on the poor, unconscious little innocent, he could have done no more than simply left him at that school. We shall see how he found out at last who his benefactor was.

English boys are sometimes brutal to one another (though not so often as some wish to make out), and are always rough. Yet I must say, as far as my personal experience goes, the French boy is entirely master in the art of tormenting. He never strikes; he does not know how to clench his fist. He is an arrant coward, according to an English schoolboy's definition of the word; but at pinching, pulling hair, ear pulling, and that class of annoyance, all the natural ingenuity of his nation comes out, and he is superb; add to this a combined insolent studied sarcasm, and you have an idea of what a disagreeable French schoolboy can be.

To say that the boys at poor John Mackworth's school put all these methods of torture in force against him, and ten times more, is to give one but a faint idea of his sufferings. The English at that time were hated with a hatred which we in these sober times have but little idea of; and, with the cannon of Trafalgar ringing as it were in their ears, these young French gentlemen seized

on Mackworth as a lawful prize providentially delivered into their hands. We do not know what he may have been under happier auspices, or what he may be yet with a more favourable start in another life; we have only to do with what he was. Six years of friendless persecution, of life ungraced and uncheered by domestic love, of such bitter misery as childhood alone is capable of feeling or enduring, transformed him from a child into a heartless, vindictive man.

And then, the French schoolmaster having roughly finished the piece of goods, it was sent to Rome to be polished and turned out ready for the market. Here I must leave him; I don't know the process. I have seen the article when finished and am familiar with it. I know the trade mark on it as well as I know the Tower mark on my rifle. I may predicate of a glass that it is Bohemian ruby, and yet not know how they gave it the colour. I must leave descriptions of that system to Mr. Steinmetz, and men who have been behind the scenes.

The red-hot ultramontane thorough-going Catholicism of that pretty pervert, Lady Alicia, was but ill satisfied with the sensible, old English, cut and dried notions of the good Father Clifford. A comparison of notes with two or three other great ladies, brought about a consultation, and a letter to Rome, the result of which was that a young Englishman of presentable exterior, polite manners, talking English with a slightly foreign accent, made his appearance at Ravenshoe, and was installed as

her ladyship's confessor, about eighteen months before her death.

His talents were by no means ordinary. In very few days he had gauged every intellect in the house, and found that he was by far the superior of all in wit and education; and he determined that as long as he stayed in the house he would be master there.

Densil's jealous temper sadly interfered with this excellent resolution; he was immensely angry and rebellious at the slightest apparent infringement of his prerogative, and after his parents' death treated Mackworth in such an exceedingly cavalier manner, that the latter feared he should have to move, till chance threw into his hand a whip wherewith he might drive Densil where he would. He discovered a scandalous liaison of poor Densil's, and in an indirect manner let him know that he knew all about it. This served to cement his influence until the appearance of Mrs. Ravenshoe the second, who, as we have seen, treated him with such ill-disguised contempt, that he was anything but comfortable, and was even meditating a retreat to Rome, when the conversation he overheard in the drawing-room made him pause, and the birth of the boy Cuthbert confirmed his resolution to stay.

For now, indeed, there was a prospect open to him. Here was this child delivered over to him like clay to a potter, that he might form it as he would. It should go hard but that the revenues and county influence of the Ravenshoes should tend to the glory of the Church as

heretofore. Only one person was in his way, and that was Mrs. Ravenshoe; after her death he was master of the situation with regard to the eldest of the boys. He had partly guessed, ever since he overheard the conversation of Densil and his wife, that some sort of bargain existed between them about the second child; but he paid little heed to it. It was, therefore, with the bitterest anger that he saw his fears confirmed, and Densil angrily obstinate on the matter; for, supposing Cuthbert were to die, all his trouble and anxiety would avail nothing, and the old house and lands would fall to a Protestant heir, the first time in the history of the island. Father Clifford consoled him.

Meanwhile, his behaviour towards Densil was gradually and insensibly altered. He became the free and easy man of the world, the amusing companion, the wise counsellor. He saw that Densil was of a nature to lean on some one, and he was determined it should be on him; so he made himself necessary. But he did more than this; he determined he would be beloved as well as respected, and with a happy audacity he set to work to win that poor wild foolish heart to himself, using such arts of pleasing as must have been furnished by his own mother wit, and could never have been learned in a hundred years from a Jesuit college. The poor heart was not a hard one to win; and, the day they buried poor Father Clifford in the mausoleum, it was with a mixture of pride at his own talents, and contemptuous pity for his dupe, that Mackworth

listened to Densil as he told him that he was now his only friend, and besought him not to leave him—which thing Mackworth promised, with the deepest sincerity, he would not do.

CHAPTER V.

RANFORD.

MASTER CHARLES, blessed with a placid temper and a splendid appetite, throve amazingly. Before you knew where you were, he was in tops and bottoms; before you had thoroughly realized that, he was learning his letters; then there was hardly time to turn round, before he was a rosy-cheeked boy of ten.

From the very first gleam of reason, he had been put solely and entirely under the care of Mr. Snell, the old vicar, who had been with his mother when she died, and a Protestant nurse, Mrs. Varley. Faithfully had these two discharged their sacred trust; and, if love can repay such services, right well were they repaid.

A pleasant task they had, though, for a more lovable little lad than Charles there never was. His little heart seemed to have an infinite capacity of affection for all who approached him. Everything animate came before him in the light of a friend, to whom he wished to make himself agreeable, from his kind old tutor and nurse down to his pony and terrier. Charles had not arrived at the time of life when it was possible for him to quarrel about women; and so he actually had no enemies as yet, but was welcomed by pleasant and kind faces

wherever he went. At one time he would be at his father's knee, while the good-natured Densil made him up some fishing tackle; next you would find him in the kennel with the whipper-in, feeding the hounds, half-smothered by their boisterous welcome; then the stables would own him for a time, while the lads were cleaning up and feeding; then came a sudden flitting to one of the keeper's lodges; and anon he would be down on the sands wading with half a dozen fisher-boys as happy as himself—but welcome and beloved everywhere.

Sunday was a right pleasant day for him. After seeing his father shave, and examining his gold-topped dressing-case from top to bottom—amusements which were not participated in by Cuthbert, who had grown too manly—he would haste through his breakfast, and with his clean clothes hurry down the village towards the vicarage, which stood across the stream near the church. Not to go in yet, you will observe, because the sermon, he well knew, was getting its finishing touches, and the vicar must not be disturbed. No, the old stone bridge would bring him up; and there he would stay looking at the brown crystal-clear water rushing and seething among the rocks, lying dark under the oak roots, and flashing merrily over the weir, just above the bridge; till, "flick!" a silver bar would shoot quivering into the air, and a salmon would light on the top of the fall, just where the water broke, and would struggle on into the still pool above, or be beaten back by the force, to resume his attempt when he had gained breath. The

trout, too, under the bridge, bless the rogues, they knew it was Sunday well enough—how they would lie up there in the swiftest places, where glancing liquid glorified the poor pebbles below into living amber, and would hardly trouble themselves to snap at the great fat, silly stoneflies that came floating down. Oh! it was a terrible place for dawdling was that stone bridge, on a summer sabbath morn.

But now would the country folks come trooping in from far and near, for Ravenshoe was the only church for miles, and however many of them there were, every one had a good hearty West-country greeting for him. And, as the crowd increased near the church door, there was so much to say and hear, that I am afraid the prayers suffered a little sometimes.

The villagers were pleased enough to see the lad in the old carved horsebox (not to be irreverent) of a pew, beneath the screen in the chancel, with the light from the old rose window shining on his curly brown hair. The older ones would think of the haughty beautiful lady who sat there so few years ago, and oftentimes one of the more sagacious would shake his head and mutter to himself, "Ah! if *he* were heir."

Any boy who reads this story, and I hope many will read it, is hereby advertised that it is exceedingly wrong to be inattentive in church in sermon time. It is very naughty to look up through the windows at the white clouds flying across the blue sky, and think how merrily the shadows are sweeping over the upland lawn, where

the pewits' nests are, and the blackcock is crowing on the grey stones among the heather. No boy has any right to notice another boy's absence, and spend sermon-time in wondering whether he is catching crabs among the green and crimson sea-weed on the rocks, or bathing in the still pool under the cliff. A boy had better not go to church at all, if he spends his time in thinking about the big trout that lies up in one of the pools in the woodland stream, and whether he will be able to catch a sight of him again by creeping gently through the hazel and king fern. Birds' nests, too, even though it be the ringousel's, who is to lay her last egg this blessed day, and is marked for spoliation to-morrow, should be banished from a boy's mind entirely during church time. Now, I am sorry to say that Charles was very much given to wander in church, and, when asked about the sermon by the vicar next day, would look rather foolish. Let us hope that he will be a warning to all sinners in this respect.

Then, after church, there would be dinner, at his father's lunch time, in the dark old hall, and there would be more to tell his father and brother than could be conveniently got through at that meal; then there was church again, and a long stroll in the golden sunshine along the shore. Ah, happy summer sabbaths!

The only two people who were ever cold to Charles, were his brother and Mackworth. Not that they were openly unkind, but there was between both of them and himself an indefinable gulf, an entire want of sympathy,

which grieved him sometimes, though he was as yet too young to be much troubled by it. He only exhausted all his little arts of pleasing towards them to try and win them; he was indefatigable in running messages for Cuthbert and the chaplain; and once, when kind grandaunt Ascot (she was a Miss Headstall, daughter of Sir Cingle Headstall, and married George Lord Ascot, brother of Lady Alicia, Densil's mother) sent him a pineapple in a box, he took it to the priest and would have had him take it. Mackworth refused it, but looked on him not unkindly for a few minutes, and then turned away with a sigh. Perhaps he was trying to recall the time so long, long ago, when his own face was as open and as innocent as that. God knows! Charles cried a little, because the priest wouldn't take it, and, having given his brother the best slice, ate the rest in the stable, with the assistance of his foster brother and two of the pad grooms. Thereby proving himself to be a lad of low and dissipated habits!

Cuthbert was at this time a somewhat good-looking young fellow of sixteen. Neither of the brothers was what would be called handsome, though, if Charles's face was the most pleasing, Cuthbert certainly had the most regular features. His forehead was lofty, although narrow, and flat at the sides; his cheek bones were high, and his nose was aquiline, not ill-formed, though prominent, starting rather suddenly out below his eyes; the lips were thin, the mouth small and firmly closed, and the chin short and prominent. The *tout ensemble* was

hardly pleasing even at this youthful period; the face was too much formed and decided for so young a man.

Cuthbert was a reserved methodical lad, with whom no one could find fault, and yet whom few liked. He was studious and devout to an extent rare in one so young; and, although a capital horseman and a good shot, he but seldom indulged in those amusements, preferring rather a walk with the steward, and soon returning to the dark old library to his books and Father Mackworth. There they two would sit, like two owls, hour after hour, appearing only at meals, and talking French to one another, noticing Charley but little; who, however, was always full of news, and would tell it, too, in spite of the inattention of this strange couple. Densil began to respect and be slightly afraid of his eldest son, as his superior in learning and in natural abilities; but I think Charles had the biggest share in his heart.

Aunt Ascot had a year before sent for Cuthbert to pay her a visit at Ranford, her son's, Lord Ascot's place, where she lived with him, he being a widower, and kept house for him. Ranford, we all know, or ought to know, contains the largest private racing stud in England, and the Ascot family for many generations had given themselves up entirely to sporting—so much so, that their marriages with other houses have been to a certain extent influenced by it; and so poor Cuthbert, as we may suppose, was quite like a fish out of water. He detested and despised the men he met there, and they, on their parts, such of them as chose to notice him,

thought him a surly young book-worm; and, as for his grandaunt, he hated the very sound of that excellent lady's voice. Her abruptness, her homœopathic medicines, her Protestantism (which she was always airing), and her stable-talk, nearly drove him mad; while she, on the other hand, thought him one of the most disagreeable boys she had ever met in her life. So the visit was rather a failure than otherwise, and not very likely to be repeated. Nevertheless, her ladyship was very fond of young faces, and so, in a twelvemonth, she wrote to Densil as follows:—

"I am one mass of lumbago all round the small of my back, and I find nothing like opodeldoc after all. The pain is very severe, but I suppose you would comfort me, as a heretic, by saying it is nothing to what I shall endure in a few years' time. Bah! I have no patience with you Papists, packing better people than yourselves off somewhere in that free-and-easy way. By-the-bye, how is that father confessor of yours, Markworth, or some such name—mind me, Ravenshoe, that fellow is a rogue, and you being, like all Ravenshoes, a fool, there is a pair of you. Why, if one of Ascot's grooms was to smile as that man does, or to whine in his speech as that man does, when he is talking to a woman of rank, I'd have him discharged on the spot, without warning, for dishonesty.

"Don't put a penny on Ascot's horse at Chester; he will never stay over the Cup course. Curfew, in my opinion, looks by no means badly for the Derby; he is

scratched for the Two Thousand—which was necessary, though I am sorry for it, &c. &c. &c.

"I wish you would send me your boy, will you? Not the eldest: the Protestant one. Perhaps he mayn't be such an insufferable coxcomb as his brother."

At which letter Densil shook his honest sides with uproarious laughter. "Cuthbert, my boy," he said, "you have won your dear aunt's heart entirely; though she, being determined to mortify the flesh with its affections, does not propose seeing you again, but asks for Charley. The candour of that dear old lady increases with her age. You seem to have been making your court too, father; she speaks of your smile in the most unqualified terms."

"Her ladyship must do me the honour to quiz me," said Mackworth. "If it is possible to judge by her eye, she must like me about as well as a mad dog."

"For my part, father," said Cuthbert, curling up the corners of his thin lips sardonically, "I shall be highly content to leave my dear aunt in the peaceable enjoyment of her favourite society of grooms, horse-jockies, blacklegs, dissenting ministers, and such-like. A month in that house, my dear Charley, will qualify you for a billiard-marker; and, after a course of six weeks, you will be fit to take the situation of croupier in a low hell on a race-course. How you will enjoy yourself, my dear!"

"Steady, Cuthbert, steady," said his father; "I can't allow you to talk like that about your cousin's house.

It is a great house for field sports, but there is not a better conducted house in the kingdom."

Cuthbert lay over on the sofa to fondle a cat, and then continued speaking very deliberately, in a slightly louder voice,—

"I will allow my aunt to be the most polite, intellectual, delicate-minded old lady in creation, my dearest father, if you wish it; only, not having been born (I beg her pardon, dropped) in a racing stable, as she was herself, I can hardly appreciate her conversation always. As for my cousin, I consider him a splendid sample of an hereditary legislator. Charley, dear, you won't go to church on Sunday afternoon at Ranford; you will go into the croft with your cousin Ascot to see the chickens fed. Ascot is very curious in his poultry, particularly on Sunday afternoon. Father, why does he cut all the cocks' tails square?"

"Pooh, pooh," said Densil, "what matter; many do it, besides him. Don't you be squeamish, Cuthbert—though, mind you, I don't defend cock-fighting on Sunday.

Cuthbert laughed and departed, taking his cat with him.

Charles had a long coach journey of one day, and then an awful and wonderful journey on the Great Western Railway as far as Twyford—alighting at which place, he was accosted by a pleasant-looking, fresh-coloured boy, dressed in close-fitting cord trousers, a blue handkerchief, spotted with white, and a Scotch cap; who said—

"Oh! I'm your cousin Welter. I'm the same age

as you, and I'm going to Eton next half. I've brought you over Tiger, because Punch is lame, and the station-master will look after your things; so we can come at once."

The boys were friends in two minutes; and, going out, there was a groom holding two ponies—on the prettiest of which Charley soon found himself seated, and jogging on with his companion towards Henley.

I like to see two honest lads, just introduced, opening their hearts to one another, and I know nothing more pleasant than to see how they rejoice as each similarity of taste comes out. By the time these two had got to Henley Bridge, Lord Welter had heard the name of every horse in the Ravenshoe stables, and Charley was rapidly getting learned in Lord Ascot's racing stud. The river at Henley distracted his attention for a time, as the biggest he had seen, and he asked his cousin, "Did he think the Mississippi was much bigger than that now?" and Lord Welter supposed, "Oh dear yes, a great deal bigger," he should say. Then there was more conversation about dogs and guns, and pleasant country places to ride through; then a canter over a lofty breezy down, and then the river again, far below, and at their feet the chimneys of Ranford.

The house was very full; and, as the boys came up there was a crowd of phaetons, dog-carts, and saddle-horses, for the people were just arriving home for dinner after the afternoon drive, and, as they had all been to the same object of attraction that afternoon, they had all

come in together and were loitering about talking, some not yet dismounted, and some on the steps. Welter was at home at once, and had a word with every one; but Charles was left alone, sitting on his pony, feeling very shy; till, at last, a great brown man with a great brown moustache, and a gruff voice, came up to him and lifted him off the horse, holding him out at arm's length for inspection.

"So you are Curly Ravenshoe's boy, hey?" said he.

"Yes, sir."

"Ha!" said the stranger, putting him down, and leading him towards the door; "just tell your father you saw General Mainwaring, will you, and that he wanted to know how his old friend was."

Charles looked at the great brown hand which was in his own, and thought of the Affghan war, and of all the deeds of renown that that hand had done, and was raising his eyes to the general's face, when they were arrested half-way by another face, not the general's.

It was that of a handsome, grey-headed man, who might have been sixty, he was so well *conservé*, but who was actually far more. He wore his own white hair, which contrasted strongly with a pair of delicate thin black eyebrows. His complexion was florid, with scarcely a wrinkle, his features were fine and regular, and a pair of sparkling dark grey eyes gave a pleasant light to his face. His dress was wondrously neat, and Charles, looking on him, guessed, with a boy's tact, that he was a man of mark.

"Whose son did you say he was, general?" said the stranger.

"Curly's!" said Mainwaring, stopping and smiling.

"No, really!" said the other; and then he looked fixedly at Charles and began to laugh, and Charley, seeing nothing better to do, looked up at the grey eyes and laughed too, and this made the stranger worse; and then, to crown the joke, the general began to laugh too, though none of them had said a syllable more than what I have written down; and at last the ridiculous exhibition finished up by the old gentleman taking a great pinch of snuff from a gold box, and turning away.

Charles was much puzzled, and was still more so when, in an hour's time, having dressed himself and being on his way downstairs to his aunt's room, who had just come in, he was stopped on a landing by this same old gentleman, beautifully dressed for dinner, who looked on him as before.

He didn't laugh this time, but he did worse. He utterly "dumbfoundered" Charley by asking abruptly—

"How's Jim?"

"He is very well, thank you, sir. His wife Norah nursed me when mamma died."

"Oh, indeed," said the other; "so he hasn't cut your father's throat yet, or anything of that sort?"

"Oh dear no," said Charles, horrified; "bless you, what can make you think of such things? Why, he is the kindest man in the world."

"I don't know," said the old gentleman, thoughtfully;

"that excessively faithful kind of creature is very apt to do that sort of thing. I should discharge any servant of mine who exhibited the slightest symptoms of affection as a dangerous lunatic;" with which villainous sentiment he departed.

Charles thought what a strange old gentleman he was for a short time, and then slid down the banisters. They were better banisters than those at Ravenshoe, being not so steep, and longer: so he went up, and slid down again;[1] after which he knocked at his aunt's door.

It was with a beating heart that he waited for an answer. Cuthbert had described Lady Ascot as such a horrid old ogress, that he was not without surprise when a cheery voice said, "Come in," and, entering a handsome room, he found himself in presence of a noble-looking old lady, with grey hair, who was netting in an upright, old-fashioned chair.

"So you are Charles Ravenshoe, eh?" she began. "Why, my dear, you must be perished with cold and hunger. I should have come in before, but I didn't expect you so soon. Tea will be here directly. You ain't a beauty, my dear, but I think I shall like you. There never was but one really handsome Ravenshoe, and that was poor Petre, your grandfather. Poor Alicia made a great fool of herself, but she was very happy with him. Welter, you naughty boy, be still."

[1] The best banisters for sliding down are broad oak ones, with a rib in the middle. This new narrow sort, which is coming in, are wretched.

The Right Honourable Viscount Welter wanted his tea, and was consequently troublesome and fractious. He had picked a quarrel with his grandmother's terrier, which he averred had bitten him in the leg, and he was now heating the poker, in order, he informed the old lady, to burn the place out, and prevent hydrophobia. Whether he would have done so or not, we shall never know now, for, tea coming in at that moment, he instantly sat down at table, and called to Charles to do likewise.

"Call Miss Adelaide, will you, Sims?" said Lady Ascot; and presently there came tripping into the room the loveliest little blonde fairy, about ten years old, that ever you saw. She fixed her large blue eyes on Charley, and then came up and gave him a kiss, which he, the rogue, returned with interest, and then, taking her seat at the table, she turned to Welter, and hoped he was going to be good.

Such, however, it soon appeared, was not his lordship's intention. He had a guest at table, and he was bound in honour to show off before him, besides having to attend to his ordinary duty of frightening his grandmother as nearly into fits as was safe. Accordingly, he began the repast by cramming buns into his mouth, using the handle of his knife as a rammer, until the salvation of his life appeared an impossibility, at which point he rose and left the room with a rapid, uneven step. On his reappearance he began drinking, but, having caught his grandmother's eye over his teacup, he

winked at her, and then held his breath till he was purple, and she begun to wring her hands in despair. All this time he was stimulated by Charles's laughter and Adelaide's crying out, continually, "Oh, isn't he a naughty boy, Lady Ascot? oh, do tell him not to do it." But the crowning performance of this promising young gentleman—the feat which threw everything else into the shade, and which confirmed Charley in his admiration of his profound talents—was this. Just as a tall, grave, and handsome footman was pouring water into the teapot, and while her ladyship was inspecting the operation with all the intense interest of an old tea-maker, at that moment did Lord Welter contrive to inflict on the unfortunate man a pinch on the leg, of such a shrewdly agonising nature as caused him to gnash his teeth in Lady Ascot's face, to cry aloud, "Oh, Lord!" to whirl the kettle within an inch of her venerable nose, and finally, to gyrate across the room on one leg, and stand looking like the king of fools.

Lady Ascot, who had merely seen the effect, and not the cause, ordered him promptly to leave the room, whereupon Welter explained, and afterwards continued to Charles, with an off-hand candour quite his own, as if no such person as his grandmother was within a hundred miles—

"You know, Charley, I shouldn't dare to behave like this if my tutor was at home; she'd make nothing of telling him, now. She's in a terrible wax, but she'll be all right by the time he comes back from his holidays; n't you, grandma?"

"You wicked boy," she replied, "I hope Hawtrey will cure you; Keate would have, I know."

The boys slid on the banisters; then they went to dessert. Then they went upstairs, and looked over Welter's cricket apparatus, fishing tackle, and so on; and then they went into the billiard-room, which was now lighted up and full of guests.

There were two tables in the room, at one of which a pool was getting up, while the other was empty. Welter was going to play pool, and Charles would have liked to do so too, being a very tolerable player; only he had promised his old tutor not to play for money till he was eighteen, and so he sat in the corner by the empty table, under the marking-board, with one leg gathered under him, and instantly found himself thinking about the little girl he had seen upstairs.

Once or twice he was surprised to find himself thinking so much about her, but he found it a pleasant subject, too, for he had sat in his corner more than half an hour without changing it, when he became aware that two men were taking down cues from the rack, and were going to play at his table.

They were his two friends of the afternoon, General Mainwaring and the grey-headed man who laughed. When they saw him they seemed glad, and the old gentleman asked him why he wasn't playing.

"I musn't play pool," he answered. "I should like to mark for you."

"Well said, my hero," said the general: "and so Jim's an honest man, is he?"

Charles saw that the old gentleman had told the general what had passed on the stairs, and wondered why he should take such an interest in him; but he soon fell to thinking about little Adelaide again, and marking mechanically though correctly.

He was aroused by the general's voice—"Who did you mark that last miss to, my little man?" he said.

"To the old gentleman," said Charles, and then blushed at the consciousness of having said a rude thing.

"That is one for you, Methusaleh," said the general.

"Never mind," said the old gentleman, "I have one great source of pride, which no one can rob me of; I am twelve years older than I look."

They went on playing. "By-the-by," said the general, "who is that exceedingly pretty child that the old lady has got with her?"

"A child she has adopted," said the old gentleman. "A grand-daughter of an old friend who died in poverty. She is a noble-hearted old soul, the jockey, with all her absurdities."

"Who was she?" said the general. "(That was rather a fluke, was it not?)"

"She? Why, a daughter of old Cingle Headstall's, the mad old Cheshire baronet—you don't remember him, of course, but your father knew him. Drove his tandem round and round Berkeley Square for four hours on a foggy night, under the impression he was going home to Hounslow, and then fired at the watchman who tried

to put him right, taking him for a highwayman. The son went to France, and was lost sight of in the revolution; so the girl came in for what money there was: not very much, I take it. This poor thing, who was pretty and clever enough, but without education, having been literally brought up in a stable, captivated the sagacious Ascot, and made him a capital wife."

"I suppose she'll portion this girl, then; you say she had money?"

"H'm," said the old gentleman, "there's a story about the aforesaid money, which is told in different ways, but which amounts to this, that the money is no more. Hallo, our marker is getting sleepy."

"Not at all, sir," said Charles. "If you will excuse me a moment I will come back."

He ran across to Lord Welter, who was leaning on his cue. "Can you tell me," said he, "who is that old gentleman?"

"Which old gentleman?"

"That one, with the black eyebrows, playing with General Mainwaring. There, he is taking snuff."

"Oh, *him?*" said Welter; "that is Lord Saltire."

CHAPTER VI.

THE WARREN HASTINGS.

TIME, the inexorable, kept mowing away at poor Charles's flowers until the disagreeable old creature had cut them all down but two or three, and mowed right into the morning when it was necessary that he should go home; and then Charles, looking forward through his tears, could see nothing at first but the very commonest grass. For was he not going to leave Adelaide, probably never to see her again? In short, Charles was in love, and going to separate from the object of his affections for the first time; at which I request you will not laugh, but just reflect how old you were yourself when you first fell in love.

The little flirt, she must have waited till she heard him coming out of his room, and then have pretended to be coming upstairs all in a hurry. He got a kiss or a dozen, though, and a lock of hair, I believe; but he hadn't much time to think about it, for Lord Ascot was calling out for him, and when he got into the hall, there was all the household to see him off. Everybody had a kind word for him; the old lady cried; Lord Saltire and the general shook hands; Lord Welter said it was a beastly sell; and Lord Ascot hummed and

hawed, and told him to tell his father he had been a good boy. They were all sorry he was going, and he felt as though he was leaving old friends; but the carriage was there, and the rain was pouring down; and, with one last look at the group of faces, he was in the carriage and away.

It was a terrible day, though he did not notice it at first. He was thinking how pleasant it was that the people were all so kind to him, just as kind as they were at home. He thought of Adelaide, and wondered whether she would ever think of him. He was rather glad that Welter was such a naughty boy (not really naughty, you know), because she would be less likely to like him. And then he thought how glad the people at home would be to see him; and then he looked out of window. He had left Lord Ascot's carriage and got into the train some time before this. Now he saw that the train was going very slowly, and nothing was visible through the driving rain. Then he tried to remember whether he had ever heard his father speak of Lord Saltire, and what he had heard about him; and, thinking about this, the train stopped.—Swindon.

He got out to go to the refreshment room, and began wondering what the noise was which prevented him from hearing any one when they spoke, and why the people looked scared and talked in knots. Then he found that it was the wind in the roof; and some one told him that a chimney had been blown across the line, and they must wait till it was removed.

All the day the brave engine fought westward against the wind, and two hours after time Charles found himself in the coach which would take him to Stonnington. The night crept on, and the coach crawled on its way through the terrible night, and Charles slept. In the cold pitiless morning, as they were going over a loftily exposed moor, the coach, though only going foot's pace, stood for an instant on two wheels, and then fell crashing over on to a heap of road-side stones, awaking Charles, who, being unhurt, lay still for a minute or so, with a faint impression of having been shaken in his sleep, and, after due reflection, made the brilliant discovery that the coach was upset.

He opened the door over his head and jumped out. For an instant he was blinded by the stinging rain, but turned his back to it; and then, for the first time, he became aware that this was the most terrible gale of wind he had ever seen in his lifetime.

He assisted the coachman and guard, and the solitary outside passenger, to lead the poor horses along the road. They fought on for about two hundred yards, and came to an alehouse, on the sight of which Charles knew that they were two stages short of where he thought they had been, for this was the Watershed Inn, and the rain from its roof ran partly into the Bristol Channel and partly into the British.

After an hour's rest here Charles was summoned to join the coach in the valley below, and they crawled on again. It was a weary day over some very bleak

country. They saw in one place a cottage unroofed on a moor, and the terrified family crouched down beneath the tottering walls. In the valleys great trees were down across the road, which were cross-cut and moved by country men, who told of oaks of three hundred years, fallen in the night, and of corn stacks hurried before the blast like the leaves of autumn. Still, as each obstacle was removed, there was the guard up blowing his horn cheerily, and Charles was inside with a jump, and on they went.

At last, at three o'clock, the coach drove under the gate of the "Chichester Arms," at Stonnington, and Charles, jumping out, was received by the establishment with the air of people who had done a clever thing, and were ready to take their meed of praise with humility. The handsome landlady took great credit to herself for Charles's arrival—so much so, that one would have thought she herself had single-handed dragged the coach from Exeter. "*She* had been sure all along that Mr. Charles would come." A speech which, with the cutting glance that accompanied it, goaded the landlord to retort in a voice wheezy with good living, and to remind her that she had said, not ten minutes before, that she was quite sure he wouldn't; whereupon the landlady loftily begged him not to expose himself before the servants. At which the landlord laughed, and choked himself; at which the landlady slapped him on the back, and laughed too; after which they went in.

His father, the landlord told him, had sent his pony over, as he was afraid of a carriage on the moor to-day, and that, if he felt at all afraid to come on, he was to sleep where he was. Charles looked at the comfortable parlour and hesitated; but, happening to close his eyes an instant, he saw as plain as possible the library at home, and the flickering fire-light falling on the crimson and oak furniture, and his father listening for him through the roaring wind; and so he hesitated no longer, but said he would push on, and that he would wish to see his servant while he took dinner.

The landlord eyed him admiringly with his head on one side, and proceeded to remark that corn was down another shilling; that Squire West had sold his chesnut mare for one hundred and twenty pounds; and that if he kept well under the walls going home he would be out of the wind; that his missis was took poorly in the night with spasms, and had been cured by two wine-glasses of peppermint; that a many chimney-pots was blown down, and that old Jim Baker had heard tell as a pig was blowed through the church window. After which he poked the fire and retired.

Charles was hard at his dinner when his man came in. It was the oldest of the pad grooms—a man with grizzled hair, looking like a white terrier; and he stood before him smoothing his face with his hand.

"Hallo, Michael," said Charley, "how came you to come?"

"Master wouldn't send no other, sir. It's a awful day

down there; there's above a hundred trees down along the road."

"Shall we be able to get there?"

"As much as we shall, sir."

"Let us try. Terrible sea, I suppose?"

"Awful to look at, sir. Mr. Mackworth and Mr. Cuthbert are down to look at it."

"No craft ashore?"

"None as yet. None of our boats is out. Yesterday morning a Pill boat, 52, stood in to see where she was and beat out again, but that was before it came on so bad."

So they started. They pushed rapidly out of the town, and up a narrow wooded valley which led to the moor which lay between them and Ravenshoe. For some time they were well enough sheltered, and made capital way, till the wood began to grow sparer, and the road to rise abruptly. Here the blast began to be more sensibly felt, and in a quarter of a mile they had to leap three uprooted trees; before them they heard a rushing noise like the sea. It was the wind upon the moor.

Creeping along under the high stone walls and bending down, they pushed on still, until, coming to the open moor, and receiving for the first time the terrible tornado full in their faces, the horses reared up and refused to proceed; but, being got side by side, and their heads being homeward, they managed to get on, though the rain upon their faces was agonising.

As they were proceeding thus, with Michael on the

windward side, Charles looked up, and there was another horseman beside him. He knew him directly; it was Lloyd's agent.

"Anything wrong, Mr. Lewis? Any ship ashore?" he shouted.

"Not yet, sir," said the agent. "But there'll be many a good sailor gone to the bottom before to-morrow morning, I am thinking. This is the heaviest gale for forty years."

By degrees they descended to more sheltered valleys, and after a time found themselves in the court-yard of the hall. Charles was caught up by his father; Lloyd's agent was sent to the housekeeper's room; and very soon Charles had forgotten all about wind and weather, and was pouring into his father's ear all his impressions of Ranford.

"I am glad you like it," said Densil, "and I'll be bound they liked you. You ought to have gone first; Cuthbert don't suit them."

"Oh, Cuthbert's too clever for them," said Charles; "they are not at all clever people, bless you!" And only just in time too, for Cuthbert walked into the room.

"Well, Charley," he said coolly, "so you're come back. Well, and what did you think of Welter, eh? I suppose he suited you?"

"I thought him very funny, Cuthbert," said Charles timidly.

"I thought him an abominable young nuisance," said

Cuthbert. "I hope he hasn't taught you any of his fool's tricks."

Charles wasn't to be put off like this; so he went and kissed his brother, and then came back to his father. There was a long dull evening, and when they went to complines, he went to bed. Up in his room he could hear that the wind was worse than ever, not rushing up in great gusts and sinking again, as in ordinary gales, but keeping up one continued unvarying scream against the house, which was terrible to hear.

He got frightened at being alone; afraid of finding some ghostly thing at his elbow, which had approached him unheard through the noise. He began, indeed, to meditate upon going down stairs, when Cuthbert, coming into the next room, reassured him, and he got into bed.

This wasn't much better though, for there was a thing in a black hood came and stood at the head of his bed; and, though he could not see it, he could feel the wind of its heavy draperies as it moved. Moreover, a thing like a caterpillar, with a cat's head, about two feet long, came creep-creeping up the counterpane; which he valiantly smote, and found it to be his handkerchief —and still the unvarying roar went on till it was unendurable.

He got up and went to his brother's room, and was cheered to find a light burning; he came softly in and called "Cuthbert."

"Who is there?" asked he, with a sudden start.

"It's I," said Charles; "can you sleep?"

"Not I," said Cuthbert, sitting up. "I can hear people talking in the wind. Come into bed; I'm so glad you're come."

Charles lay down by his brother, and they talked about ghosts for a long time. Once their father came in with a light from his bed-room next door, and sat on the bed talking, as if he, too, was glad of company, and after that they dozed off and slept.

It was in the grey light of morning that they awoke together and started up. The wind was as bad as ever, but the whole house was still, and they stared terrified at one another,

"What was it?" whispered Charles.

Cuthbert shook his head and listened again. As he was opening his mouth to speak it came again, and they knew it was that which woke them. A sound like a single footstep on the floor above, light enough, but which shook the room. Cuthbert was out of bed in an instant, tearing on his clothes. Charles jumped out too, and asked him, "What is it?"

"A gun!"

Charles well knew what awful disaster was implied in those words. The wind was N.W., setting into the bay. The ship that fired that gun was doomed.

He heard his father leap out of bed and ring furiously at his bell. Then doors began to open and shut, and voices and rapid footsteps were heard in the passage. In ten minutes the whole terrified household were running hither and thither, about they hardly knew

what. The men were pale, and some of the women were beginning to whimper and wring their hands; when Densil, Lewis the agent, and Mackworth, came rapidly down the staircase and passed out. Mackworth came back, and told the women to put on hot water and heat blankets. Then Cuthbert joined him, and they went together; and directly after Charles found himself between two men-servants, being dragged rapidly along towards the low headland which bounded the bay on the east.

When they came to the beach, they found the whole village pushing on in a long straggling line the same way as themselves. The men were walking singly, either running, or going very fast; and the women were in knots of twos and threes, straggling along and talking excitedly, with much gesticulation.

"There's some of the elect on board, I'll be bound," Charles heard one woman say, "as will be supping in glory this blessed night."

"Ay, ay," said an old woman, "I'd sooner be taken to rest sudden, like they're going to be, than drag on till all the faces you know are gone before."

"My boy," said another, "was lost in a typhoon in the China sea. Darn they lousy typhoons! I wonder if he thought of his mother afore he went down."

Among such conversation as this, with the terrible, ceaseless thunder of the surf upon his left, Charles, clinging tight to his two guardians, made the best weather of it he could, until they found themselves on the short turf of the promontory, with their faces sea-

ward, and the water right and left of them. The cape ran out about a third of a mile, rather low, and then abruptly ended in a cone of slate, beyond which, about two hundred yards at sea, was that terrible sunken rock, "the Wolf," on to which, as sure as death, the flowing tide carried every stick which was embayed. The tide was making; a ship was known to be somewhere in the bay; it was blowing a hurricane; and what would you more?

They hurried along as well as they could among the sharp slates which rose through the turf, until they came to where the people had halted. Charles saw his father, the agent, Mackworth, and Cuthbert together, under a rock; the villagers were standing around, and the crowd was thickening every moment. Every one had his hand over his eyes, and was peering due to windward, through the driving scud.

They had stopped at the foot of the cone, which was between them and the sea, and some more adventurous had climbed partly up it, if, perhaps, they might see further than their fellows; but in vain: they all saw and heard the same—a blinding white cauldron of wind-driven spray below, and all around, filling every cranny —the howling storm.

A quarter of an hour since she fired last, and no signs of her yet. She must be carrying canvas and struggling for life, ignorant of the four-knot stream. Some one says she may have gone down—hush! who spoke?

Old Sam Evans had spoken. He had laid his hand

on the squire's shoulder, and said, "There she is." And hen arose a hubbub of talking from the men, and every one crowded on his neighbour and tried to get nearer. And the women moved hurriedly about, some moaning to themselves, and some saying, "Ah, poor dear!" "Ah, dear Lord! there she is, sure enough."

She hove in sight so rapidly that, almost as soon as they could be sure of a dark object, they saw that it was a ship—a great ship about 900 tons; that she was dismasted, and that her decks were crowded. They could see that she was unmanageable, turning her head hither and thither as the sea struck her, and that her people had seen the cliff at the same moment, for they were hurrying aft, and crowding on to the bulwarks.

Charles and his guardians crept up to his father's party. Densil was standing silent, looking on the lamentable sight; and, as Charles looked at him, he saw a tear run down his cheek, and heard him say, "Poor fellows!" Cuthbert stood staring intently at the ship, with his lips slightly parted. Mackworth, like one who studies a picture, held his elbow in one hand, and kept the other over his mouth; and the agent cried out, "A troop-ship, by gad. Dear! dear!"

It is a sad sight to see a fine ship beyond control. It is like seeing one one loves gone mad. Sad under any circumstances; how terrible it is when she is bearing on with her in her mad Bacchante's dance a freight of living human creatures, to untimely destruction!

As each terrible feature and circumstance of the catastrophe became apparent to the lookers-on, the excitement became more intense. Forward and in the waist, there was a considerable body of seamen clustered about under the bulwarks—some half-stripped. In front of the cuddy door, between the poop and the mainmast, about forty soldiers were drawn up, with whom were three officers, to be distinguished by their blue coats and swords. On the quarter-deck were seven or eight women, two apparently ladies, one of whom carried a baby. A well-dressed man, evidently the captain, was with them; but the cynosure of all eyes was a tall man in white trousers, at once and correctly judged to be the mate, who carried in his arms a little girl.

The ship was going straight upon the rock, now only marked as a whiter spot upon the whitened sea, and she was fearfully near it, rolling and pitching, turning her head hither and thither, fighting for her life. She had taken comparatively little water on board as yet; but now a great sea struck her forward, and she swung with her bow towards the rock, from which she was distant not a hundred yards. The end was coming. Charles saw the mate slip off his coat and shirt, and take the little girl again. He saw the lady with the baby rise very quietly and look forward; he saw the sailors climbing on the bulwarks; he saw the soldiers standing steady in two scarlet lines across the deck; he saw the officers wave their hands to one another, and then he

hid his face in his hands, and sobbed as if his heart would break.

They told him after how the end had come; she had lifted up her bows defiantly, and brought them crashing down upon the pitiless rock as though in despair. Then her stern had swung round, and a merciful sea broke over her, and hid her from their view, though above the storm they plainly heard her brave old timbers crack; then she floated off, with bulwarks gone, sinking, and drifted out of sight round the headland, and, though they raced across the headland, and waited a few breathless minutes for her to float round into sight again, they never saw her any more. The Warren Hastings had gone down in fifteen fathom. And now there was a new passion introduced into the tragedy, to which it had hitherto been a stranger—Hope. The wreck of part of the mainmast and half the main-topmast, which they had seen, before she struck, lumbering the deck, had floated off, and there were three, four, five men clinging to the futtock shrouds; and then, they saw the mate with the child hoist himself on to the spar, and part his dripping hair from his eyes.

The spar had floated into the bay, into which they were looking, into much calmer water; but, directly to leeward, the swell was tearing at the black slate rocks, and in ten minutes it would be on them. Every man saw the danger, and Densil, running down to the water's edge, cried—

"Fifty pound to any one who will take 'em a

rope! Fifty gold sovereigns down to-night! Who's going?"

Jim Matthews was going, and had been going before he heard of the fifty pound—that was evident; for he was stripped, and out on the rocks with the rope round his waist. He stepped from the bank of slippery sea-weed into the heaving water, and then his magnificent limbs were in full battle with the tide. A roar announced his success. As he was seen clambering on to the spar, a stouter rope was paid out; and very soon it and its burden were high and dry upon the little half-moon of sand which ended the bay.

Five sailors, the first mate, and a bright-eyed little girl were their precious prize. The sailors lay about upon the sand, and the mate, untying the shawl that bound her to him, put the silent and frightened child into the hands of a woman who stood close by.

The poor little thing was trembling in every limb. "If you please," she said to the woman, "I should like to go to mamma. She is standing with baby on the quarter-deck. Mr. Archer, will you take me back to mamma, please? She will be frightened if we stay away."

"Well, a deary me," said the honest woman, "she'll break my heart, a darling; mamma's in heaven, my tender, and baby too."

"No, indeed," said the child, eagerly; "she's on the quarter-deck. Mr. Archer, Mr. Archer!"

The mate, a tall, brawny, whiskerless, hard-faced

man, about six-and-twenty, who had been thrust into a pea-coat, now approached.

"Where's mamma, Mr. Archer?" said the child.

"Where's mamma, my lady-bird? Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"And where's the ship, and Captain Dixon, and the soldiers?"

"The ship, my pretty love," said the mate, putting his rough hand on the child's wet hair; "why the good ship, Warren Hastings, Dixon master, is a-sunk beneath the briny waves, my darling; and all on board of her, being good sailors and brave soldiers, is doubtless at this moment in glory."

The poor little thing set up a low wailing cry, which went to the hearts of all present; then the women carried her away, and the mate, walking between Mackworth and Densil, headed the procession homeward to the hall.

"She was the Warren Hastings, of 900 tons," he said, "from Calcutta, with a detachment of the 120th on board. The old story—dismasted, both anchors down, cables parted, and so on. And now I expect you know as much as I do. This little girl is daughter to Captain Corby, in command of the troops. She was always a favourite of mine, and I determined to get her through. How steady those sojers stood, by jingo, as though they were on parade. Well, I always thought something was going to happen, for we had never a quarrel the whole voyage, and that's curious with troops. Capital

crew, too. Ah, well, they are comfortable enough now, eh, sir?"

That night the mate arose from his bed like a giant refreshed with wine, and posted off to Bristol to "her owners," followed by a letter from Densil, and another from Lloyd's agent, of such a nature that he found himself in command of a ship in less than a month. Periodically, unto this day, there arrive at Ravenshoe, bows and arrows (supposed to be poisoned), paddles, punkahs, rice-paper screens; a malignant kind of pickle, which causeth the bowels of him that eateth of it to burn; wicked-looking old gods of wood and stone; models of Juggernaut's car; brown earthenware moonshees, translating glazed porcelain bibles; and many other Indian curiosities, all of which are imported and presented by the kind-hearted Archer.

In a fortnight the sailors were gone, and save a dozen or so of new graves in the churchyard, nothing remained to tell of the Warren Hastings but the little girl saved so miraculously—little Mary Corby.

She had been handed over at once to the care of the kind-hearted Norah, Charles's nurse, who instantaneously loved her with all her great warm heart, and about three weeks after the wreck gave Charles these particulars about her, when he went to pay her a visit in the cottage behind the kennels.

After having hugged him violently, and kissed him till he laughingly refused to let her do it again till she had told him the news, she began—"The beauty-boy,

he gets handsomer every day" (this might be true, but there was great room for improvement yet), "and comes and sees his old nurse, and who loves him so well, alanna? It's little I can tell ye about the little girl, me darlin'. She's nine years old, and a heretic, like yer own darlin' self, and who's to gainsay ye from it? She's book-learned enough, and play she says she can, and I axed her would she like to live in the great house, and she said no. She liked me, and wanted to stay with me. She cries about her mother, a dear, but not so much as she did, and she's now inside and asleep. Come here, Avick."

She bent down her handsome face to Charles's ear, and whispered, "If my boy was looking out for a little wee fairy wife, eh?"

Charles shook his hair, and laughed, and there and then told Norah all about Adelaide, which attachment Norah highly approved of, and remarked that he'd be old enough to be married before he knew where he was.

In spite of Densil's letters and inquiries, no friends came forward to claim little Mary. Uncle Corby, when in possession of facts, was far too much a man of business to do anything of the kind. In a very short time Densil gave up inquiring, and then he began dreading lest she should be taken from him, for he had got wonderfully fond of the quiet, pale, bright-eyed little creature. In three months she was considered as a permanent member of the household, and the night

before Charles went to school he told her of his grand passion. His lordship considered this step showed deep knowledge of the world, as it would have the effect of crushing in the bud any rash hopes which Mary might have conceived; and, having made this provision for her peace of mind, he straightway departed to Shrewsbury school.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH CHARLES AND LORD WELTER DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES AT THE UNIVERSITY.

It is a curious sensation, that of meeting, as a young man of two or three and twenty, a man one has last seen as a little lad of ten, or thereabouts. One is almost in a way disappointed. You may be asked out to dinner to meet a man called, say, Jones (or if you like the name better, Delamere D'Eresby), whom you believe to be your old friend Jones, and whom you have not seen for a month or so; and on getting to the house find it is not your Jones at all, but another Jones whom you don't know. He may be cleverer, handsomer, more agreeable than your old friend—a man whom you are glad to know; and yet you are disappointed. You don't meet the man you expected, and are rather disposed to be prejudiced against his representative.

So it is when you meet a friend in manhood whom you have not seen since you were at school. You have been picturing to yourself the sort of man your friend must have developed into, and you find him different from what you thought. So, instead of foregathering with an old friend, you discover that you have to make a new acquaintance.

You will now have to resume the acquaintance of Charles Ravenshoe at two and twenty. I hope you will not be much disappointed in him. He was a very nice boy, if you remember, and you will see immediately that he has developed into a very nice young man indeed. It is possible that I may not be about to introduce him to you under the most favourable circumstances; but he created those circumstances for himself, and must abide by them. As it is not my intention to follow him through any part of his University life, but only to resume his history when he quits it, so it becomes imperatively necessary upon me to state, without any sort of disguise, the reason why he did leave it. And, as two or three other important characters in the story had something to do with it, I shall do so more at length than would at first seem necessary.

It was nine o'clock on the 6th of November. The sun, which had been doing duty for her Majesty all night at Calcutta, Sydney, &c., had by this time reached Oxford, and was shining aslant into two pretty little Gothic windows in the inner, or library quadrangle of St. Paul's College, and illuminating the features of a young man who was standing in the middle of the room and scratching his head.

He was a stout-built fellow, not particularly handsome, but with a very pleasing face. His hair was very dark brown, short, and curling; his forehead was broad and open, and below it were two uncommonly pleasant-looking dark grey eyes. His face was rather marked,

his nose very slightly aquiline, and plenty of it, his mouth large and good-humoured, which, when opened to laugh, as it very frequently was, showed a splendid set of white teeth, which were well contrasted with a fine healthy brown and red complexion. Altogether a very pleasant young fellow to look on, and looking none the worse just now, for an expression of droll perplexity, not unmixed with a certain amount of terror, which he had on his face.

It was Charles Ravenshoe.

He stood in his shirt and trousers only, in the midst of a scene of desolation so awful, that I who have had to describe some of the most terrible scenes and circumstances conceivable, pause, before attempting to give any idea of it in black and white. Every moveable article in the room—furniture, crockery, fender, fire-irons—lay in one vast heap of broken confusion in the corner of the room. Not a pane of glass remained in the windows; the bedroom door was broken down; and the door which opened into the corridor was minus the two upper panels. Well might Charles Ravenshoe stand there and scratch his head.

"By George," he said at last, soliloquising, "how deuced lucky it is that I never get drunk. If I had been screwed last night, those fellows would have burnt the college down. What a devil that Welter is when he gets drink into him; and Marlow is not much better. The fellows were mad with fighting, too. I wish they hadn't come here and made hay afterwards. There'll be

an awful row about this. It's all up, I am afraid. It's impossible to say, though."

At this moment, a man appeared in the passage, and, looking in through the broken door, as if from a witness-box, announced, "The dean wishes to see you at once, sir." And exit.

Charles replied by using an expression then just coming into use among our youth, "All serene!" dressed himself by putting on a pilot coat, a pair of boots, and a cap and gown, and with a sigh descended into the quadrangle.

There were a good many men about, gathered in groups. The same subject was in everybody's mouth. There had been, the night before, without warning or apparent cause, the most frightful disturbance which, in the opinion of the porter, had graced the college for fifty years. It had begun suddenly at half-past twelve, and had been continued till three. The dons had been afraid to come and interfere, the noise was so terrible. Five out-college men had knocked out at a quarter to three, refusing to give any name but the dean's. A rocket had been let up, and a five-barrel revolver had been let off, and—Charles Ravenshoe had been sent for.

A party of young gentlemen, who looked very seedy and guilty, stood in his way, and as he came up shook their heads sorrowfully; one, a tall one, with large whiskers, sat down in the gravel walk, and made as though he would have cast dust upon his head.

"This is a bad job, Charley," said one of them.

"Some heads must fall," said Charles; "I hope mine is not among the number. Rather a shame if it is, eh?"

The man with the big whiskers shook his head. "The state of your room," he said.

"Who has seen it?" eagerly asked Charles.

"Sleeping innocent," replied the other, "the porter was up there by eight o'clock, and at half-past the dean himself was gazing on your unconscious face as you lay peacefully sleeping in the arms of desolation."

Charles whistled long and loud, and proceeded with a sinking heart towards the dean's rooms.

A tall pale man, with a hard, marked countenance, was sitting at his breakfast, who, as soon as he saw his visitor, regarded him with the greatest interest, and buttered a piece of toast.

"*Well*, Mr. Ravenshoe," was his remark.

"I believe you sent for me, sir," said Charles, adding to himself, "Confound you, you cruel old brute, you are amusing yourself with my tortures."

"This is a pretty business," said the dean.

Charles would be glad to know to what he alluded.

"Well," said the dean, laughing, "I don't exactly know where to begin. However, I am not sure it much matters. You will be wanted in the common room at two. The proctor has sent for your character also. Altogether, I congratulate you. Your career at the University has been brilliant; but, your orbit being highly elliptical, it is to be feared that you will remain but a short time above the horizon. Good morning."

Charles rejoined the eager knot of friends outside; and, when he spoke the awful word "common room," every countenance wore a look of dismay. Five more, it appeared, were sent for, and three were wanted by the proctor at eleven. It was a disastrous morning.

There was a large breakfast in the rooms of the man with the whiskers, to which all the unfortunates were of course going. One or two were in a state of badly concealed terror, and fidgetted and were peevish, until they got slightly tipsy. Others laughed a good deal, rather nervously, and took the thing pluckily—the terror was there, but they fought against it; but the behaviour of Charles extorted applause from everybody. He was as cool and as merry as if he was just going down for the long vacation; he gave the most comical account of the whole proceedings last night from beginning to end, as he was well competent to do, being the only sober man who had witnessed them; he ate heartily and laughed naturally, to the admiration of every one.

One of the poor fellows who had shown greatest signs of terror, and who was as near crying as he could possibly be without actually doing so, looked up and complimented him on his courage, with an oath.

"In me, my dear Dick," said Charles, good-naturedly, "you see the courage of despair. Had I half your chances I should be as bad as you. I know there are but a few more ceremonies to be gone through, and then—"

The other rose and left the room. "Well," said he,

as he went, with a choking voice, "I expect my old governor will cut his throat or something; I'm fifteen hundred in debt." And so the door closed on the poor lad, and the party was silent.

There came in now a young man, to whom I wish especially to call your attention. He was an ordinary young man enough, in the morning livery of a groom. He was a moderately well-looking fellow, and there seems at first nothing in any way remarkable about him. But look at him again, and you are struck with a resemblance to some one you know, and yet at first you hardly know to whom. It is not decidedly, either, in any one feature, and you are puzzled for a time, till you come to the conclusion that every one else does. That man is a handsome likeness of Charles Ravenshoe.

This is Charles's foster-brother William, whom we saw on a former occasion taking refreshment with that young gentleman, and who had for some time been elevated to the rank of Mr. Charles's "lad." He had come for orders.

There were no orders but to exercise the horses, Charles believed; he would tell him in the afternoon if there were, he added sorrowfully.

"I saw Lord Welter coming away from the proctor's, sir," said William. "He told me to ask what train you were going down by. His lordship told me to say, sir, that Lord Welter of Christchurch would leave the University at twelve to-morrow, and would not come into residence again till next Michaelmas term."

"By Jove," said Charles, "he has got a dose! I didn't think they'd have given him a year. Well, here goes."

Charles went to the proctor's, but his troubles there were not so severe as he had expected. He had been seen fighting several times during the evening, but half the University had been doing the same. He had been sent home three times, and had reappeared; that was nothing so very bad. On his word of honour he had not tripped up the marshal; Brown himself thought he must have slipped on a piece of orange peel. Altogether it came to this; that Ravenshoe of Paul's had better be in by nine for the rest of term, and mind what he was about for the future.

But the common room at two was the thing by which poor Charles was to stand or fall. There were terrible odds against him—the master and six tutors. It was no use, he said, sniveling, or funking the thing; so he went in to do battle valiantly.

THE MASTER opened the ball, in a voice suggestive of mild remonstrance. In all his experience of college life, extending over a period of forty-five years, he had never even heard of proceedings so insubordinate, so unparalleled, so—so—monstrous, as had taken place the night before, in a college only a twelvemonth ago considered to be the quietest in the University. A work of fiction of a low and vicious tendency, professing to describe scenes of headlong riot and debauchery at the sister University, called, he believed, "Peter Priggins," had

been written, and was, he understood, greatly read by the youth of both seats of learning; but he was given to understand that the worst described in that book sank into nothing, actually dwindled into insignificance, before last night's proceedings. It appeared, he continued (referring to a paper through his gold eye-glasses), that at half-past twelve a band of intoxicated and frantic young men had rushed howling into the college, refusing to give their names to the porter (among whom was recognised Mr. Ravenshoe); that from that moment a scene of brutal riot had commenced in the usually peaceful quadrangle, and had continued till half-past three; loaded weapons had been resorted to, and fireworks had been exhibited; and, finally, that five members of another college had knocked out at half-past three, stating to the porter (without the slightest foundation) that they had been having tea with the dean. Now you know, really and truly, it simply resolved itself into this. Were they going to keep St. Paul's College open, or were they not? If the institution which had flourished now for above five hundred years was to continue to receive undergraduates, the disturbers of last night must be sternly eliminated. In the last case of this kind, where a man was only convicted of—eh, Mr. Dean?—pump handle—thank you—was only convicted of playfully secreting the handle of the college pump, rustication had been inflicted. In this case the college would do its duty, however painful.

Charles was understood to say that he was quite sober, and had tried to keep the fellows out of mischief.

THE MASTER believed Mr. Ravenshoe would hardly deny having let off a rocket on the grass-plat.

Charles was ill advised enough to say that he did it to keep the fellows quiet; but the excuse fell dead, and there was a slight pause. After which,

THE DEAN rose, with his hands in his pockets, and remarked that this sort of thing was all mighty fine, you know; but they weren't going to stand it, and the sooner this was understood the better. He, for one, as long as he remained dean of that college, was not going to have a parcel of drunken young idiots making a row under his windows at all hours in the morning. He should have come out himself last night, but that he was afraid, positively afraid, of personal violence; and the odds were too heavy against him. He, for one, did not want more words about it. He allowed the fact of Mr. Ravenshoe being perfectly sober, though whether that could be pleaded in extenuation was very doubtful. (Did you speak, Mr. Bursar? No. I beg pardon, I thought you did.) He proposed that Mr. Ravenshoe should be rusticated for a year, and that the Dean of Christchurch should be informed that Lord Welter was one of the most active of the rioters. That promising young nobleman had done them the honour to create a disturbance in the college on a previous occasion, when he was, as last night, the guest of Mr. Ravenshoe.

Charles said that Lord Welter had been rusticated for a year.

THE DEAN was excessively glad to hear it, and hoped that he would stay at home and give his family the benefit of his high spirits. As there were five other gentlemen to come before them he would suggest that they should come to a determination.

THE BURSAR thought that Mr. Ravenshoe's plea of sobriety should be taken in extenuation. Mr. Ravenshoe had never been previously accused of having resorted to stimulants. He thought it should be taken in extenuation.

THE DEAN was sorry to be of a diametrically opposite opinion.

No one else taking up the cudgels for poor Charles, the Master said he was afraid he must rusticate him.

Charles said he hoped they wouldn't.

THE DEAN gave a short laugh, and said that if that was all he had to say he might as well have held his tongue. And then the Master pronounced sentence of rustication for a year, and Charles, having bowed, withdrew.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHN MARSTON.

CHARLES returned to his room, a little easier in his mind than when he left it. There still remained one dreadful business to get over—the worst of all; that of letting his father know. Non-University men sneer at rustication; they can't see any particular punishment in having to absent yourself from your studies for a term or two. But do they think that the Dons don't know what they are about? Why, nine spirited young fellows out of ten would snap their fingers at rustication, if it wasn't for the *home* business. It is breaking the matter to the father, his just anger, and his mother's still more bitter reproaches. It must all come out, the why and the wherefore, without concealment or palliation. The college write a letter to justify themselves, and then a mine of deceit is sprung under the parents' feet, and their eyes are opened to things they little dreamt of. This, it appears, is not the first offence. The college has been long-suffering, and has pardoned when it should have punished repeatedly. The lad who was thought to be doing so well, has been leading a dissipated, riotous life, and deceiving them all. This is the bitterest blow they have ever had. How can they ever trust him

again?—And so the wound takes long to heal, and sometimes is never healed at all. That is the meaning of rustication.

A majority of young fellows at the University deceive their parents, especially if they come of serious houses. It is almost forced upon them sometimes, and in all cases the temptation is strong. It is very unwise to ask too many questions. Home questions are, in some cases, unpardonable. A son can't tell a father, as one man can tell another, to mind his own business. No. The father asks the question suddenly, and the son lies, perhaps, for the first time in his life. If he told the truth his father would knock him down.

Now Charles was a little better off than most young fellows in this respect. He knew his father would scold about the rustication, and still more at his being in debt. He wasn't much afraid of his father's anger. They two had always been too familiar to be much afraid of one another. He was much more afraid of the sarcasms of Mackworth, and he not a little dreaded his brother; but with regard to his father he felt but slight uneasiness.

He found his scout and his servant William trying to get the room into some order, but it was hopeless. William looked up with a blank face as he came in, and said—

"We can't do no good, sir; I'd better go for Herbert's man, I suppose?"

"You may go, William," said Charles, "to the stables,

and prepare my horses for a journey. Ward, you may pack up my things, as I go down to-morrow. I am rusticated."

They both looked very blank, especially William, who, after a long pause, said—

"I was afraid of something happening yesterday after Hall, when I see my lord—" here William paused abruptly, and, looking up, touched his head to some one who stood in the doorway.

It was a well-dressed, well-looking young man of about Charles's age, with a handsome, hairless, florid face, and short, light hair. Handsome though his face was, it was hardly pleasing in consequence of a certain lowering of the eyebrows which he indulged in every moment—as often, indeed, as he looked at any one—and also of a slight cynical curl at the corners of the mouth. There was nothing else noticeable about Lord Welter except his appearance of great personal strength, for which he was somewhat famous.

"Hallo, Welter!" shouted Charles, "yesterday was an era in the annals of intoxication. Nobody ever was so drunk as you. I did all I could for you, more fool I, for things couldn't be worse than they are, and might be better. If I had gone to bed instead of looking after you I shouldn't have been rusticated."

"I'm deuced sorry, Charley, I am, 'pon my soul. It is all my confounded folly, and I shall write to your father and say so. You are coming home with me, of course?"

"By Jove, I never thought of it. That wouldn't be a bad plan, eh? I might write from Ranford, you know. Yes, I think I'll say yes. William, you can take the horses over to-morrow. That is a splendid idea of yours. I was thinking of going to London."

"Hang London in the hunting season," said Lord Welter. "By George, how the governor will blow up. I wonder what my grandmother will say. Somebody has told her the world is coming to an end next year. I hope there'll be another Derby. She has cut homœopathy and taken to vegetable practice. She has deuced near slaughtered her maid with an over-dose of Linum Catharticum, as she calls it. She goes digging about in waste places like a witch, with a big footman to carry the spade. She is a good old body though; hanged if she ain't."

"What does Adelaide think of the change in Lady Ascot's opinions, medical and religious?"

"She don't care, bless you. She laughs about the world coming to an end, and, as for the physic, she won't stand that. She has pretty much her own way with the old lady, I can tell you, and with every one else, as far as that goes. She is an imperious little body; I'm afraid of her.—How do, Marston?"

This was said to a small, neatly-dressed, quiet-looking man, with a shrewd, pleasant face, who appeared at this moment looking very grave. He returned Welter's salutation, and that gentleman sauntered out of the room after having engaged Charles to dinner at the Cross

at six. The new comer then sat down by Charles, and looked sorrowfully in his face.

"So it has come to this, my poor boy," said he, "and only two days after our good resolutions. Charley, do you know what Issachar was like?"

"No."

"He was like a strong ass stooping between two burdens," replied the other, laughing. "I know somebody who is, oh, so very like him. I know a fellow who could do capitally in the schools and in the world, who is now always either lolling about reading novels, or else flying off in the opposite extreme, and running, or riding, or rowing like a madman. Those are his two burdens, and he is a dear old ass also, whom it is very hard to scold, even when one is furiously angry with him."

"It's all true, Marston; it's all true as Gospel," said Charles.

"Look how well you did at Shrewsbury," continued Marston, "when you were forced to work. And now, you haven't opened a book for a year. Why don't you have some object in life, old fellow? Try to be captain of the University Eight or the Eleven; get a good degree; anything. Think of last Easter vacation, Charley. Well, then, I won't——Be sure that pot-house work won't do. What earthly pleasure can there be in herding with men of that class, your inferiors in everything except strength? and you who can talk quite well enough for any society?"

"It ain't my fault," broke in Charles, piteously. "It's a good deal more the fault of the men I'm with. That Easter vacation business was planned by Welter. He wore a velveteen shooting-coat and knee-breeches, and called himself—"

"That will do, Charley; I don't want to hear any of that gentleman's performances. I entertain the strongest personal dislike for him. He leads you into all your mischief. You often quarrel; why don't you break with him?"

"I can't."

"Because he is a distant relation? Nonsense. Your brother never speaks to him."

"It isn't that."

"Do you owe him money?"

"No, it's the other way, by Jove! I can't break with that man. I can't lose the run of Ranford. I must go there. There's a girl there I care about more than all the world beside; if I don't see her I shall go mad."

Marston looked very thoughtful. "You never told me of this," he said; and she has—— she has refused you, I suppose?"

"Ay! how did you guess that?"

"By my mother wit. I didn't suppose that Charles Ravenshoe would have gone on as he has, under other circumstances."

"I fell in love with her," said Charley, rocking himself to and fro, "when she was a child. I have never had another love but her; and the last time I left

Ranford I asked her—you know—and she laughed in my face, and said we were getting too old for that sort of nonsense. And, when I swore I was in earnest, she only laughed the more. And I'm a desperate beggar, by Jove, and I'll go and enlist, by Jove."

"What a brillant idea!" said Marston. "Don't be a fool, Charley. Is this girl a great lady?"

"Great lady! Lord bless you, no; she's a dependant, without a sixpence."

"Begin all over again with her. Let her alone a little. Perhaps you took too much for granted, and offended her. Very likely she has got tired of you. By your own confession you have been making love to her for ten years; that must be a great bore for a girl, you know. I suppose you are thinking of going to Ranford, now?"

"Yes, I am going for a time."

"The worst place you could go to: much better go home to your father. Yours is a quiet, staid, wholesome house, not such a bear-garden as the other place—but, let us change the subject. I am sent after you."

"By whom?"

"Musgrave. The University Eight is going down, and he wants you to row four. The match with Cambridge is made up."

"Oh, hang it!" said poor Charles; "I can't show after this business. Get a waterman; do, Marston. They will know all about it by this time."

"Nay, I want you to come; do come, Charles. I want

you to contrast these men with the fellows you were with last night, and to see what an effect three such gentlemen and scholars as Dixon, Hunt, and Smith have in raising the tone of the men they are thrown among."

On the barge Charles met the others of the Eight—quiet, staid, gentlemanly men, every one of whom knew what had happened, and was more than usually polite in consequence. Musgrave, the captain, received him with manly courtesy. He was sorry to hear Ravenshoe was going down—had hoped to have had him in the Eight at Easter; however, it couldn't be helped; hoped to get him at Henley; and so on. The others were very courteous too, and Charles soon began to find that he himself was talking in a different tone of voice, and using different language from that which he would have been using in his cousin's rooms; and he confessed this to Marston that night.

Meanwhile the University Eight, with the little blue flag at her bows, went rushing down the river on her splendid course. Past heavy barges and fairy skiffs; past men in dingys, who ran high and dry on the bank, to get out of the way; and groups of dandys, who ran with them for a time. And before any man was warm—Iffley. Then across the broad mill-pool, and through the deep crooks, out into the broads, and past the withered beds of reeds which told of coming winter. Bridges, and a rushing lasher—Sandford. No rest here. Out of the dripping well-like lock. Get your oars out and

away again, past the yellowing willows, past the long wild grey meadows, swept by the singing autumn wind. Through the swirling curves and eddies, onward under the westering sun towards the woods of Nunenham.

It was so late when they got back, that those few who had waited for them, those faithful few who would wait till midnight to see the Eight come in, could not see them, but heard afar off the measured throb and rush of eight oars as one, as they came with rapid stroke up the darkening reach. Charles and Marston walked home together.

"By George," said Charles, "I should like to do that and nothing else all my life. What a splendid stroke Musgrave gives you, so marked, and so long, and yet so lively. Oh, I should like to be forced to row every day like the watermen."

"In six or seven years you would probably row as well as a waterman. At least, I mean, as well as some of the second-rate ones. I have set my brains to learn steering, being a small weak man; but I shall never steer as well as little Tims, who is ten years old. Don't mistake a means for an end—"

Charles wouldn't always stand his friend's good advice, and he thought he had had too much of it to-day. So he broke out into sudden and furious rebellion, much to Marston's amusement, who treasured up every word he said in his anger, and used them afterwards with fearful effect against him.

"I don't care for you," bawled Charles; "you're a

greater fool than I am, and be hanged to you. You're going to spend the best years of your life, and ruin your health, to get a first. *A first! A first!* Why that miserable little beast, Lock, got a first. A fellow who is, take him all in all, the most despicable little wretch I know! If you are very diligent you may raise yourself to *his* level! And, when you have got your precious first, you will find yourself utterly unfit for any trade or profession whatever (except the Church, which you don't mean to enter). What do you know about modern languages or modern history? If you go into the law, you have got to begin all over again. They won't take you in the army; they are not such *muffs*. And this is what you get for your fifteen hundred pounds!"

Charles paused, and Marston clapped his hands and said, "hear! *hear!*" which made him more angry still.

"I shouldn't care if I *was* a waterman. I'm sick of all this pretension and humbug; I'd sooner be anything than what I am, with my debts, and my rustication, and keeping up appearances. I wish I was a billiard marker; I wish I was a jockey; I wish I was Alick Reed's Novice; I wish I was one of Barclay and Perkins's draymen. Hang it, I wish I was a cabman! Queen Elizabeth was a wise woman, and she was of my opinion."

"Did Queen Elizabeth wish she was a cabman?" said Marston gravely.

"No, she didn't," said Charles, very tartly. "She

wished she was a milkmaid, and I think she was quite right. Now, then!"

"So you would like to be a milkmaid?" said the inexorable Marston. "You had better try another Easter vacation with Welter. Mrs. Sherrat will get you a suit of cast-off clothes from some of the lads. Here's the 'Cross,' where you dine. Bye, bye!"

John Marston knew, and knew well, nearly every one worth knowing in the University. He did not appear particularly rich; he was not handsome; he was not brilliant in conversation; he did not dress well, though he was always neat; he was not a cricketer, a rower, or a rider; he never spoke at the Union; he never gave large parties; no one knew anything about his family; he never betted; and yet he was in the best set in the University.

There was, of course, some reason for this; in fact, there were three good and sufficient reasons, although above I may seem to have exhausted the means of approach to good University society. First, He had been to Eton as a town boy, and had been popular there. Second, He had got one of the great open scholarships. And third, his behaviour had always been most correct and gentlemanly.

A year before this he had met Charles as a freshman in Lord Welter's rooms, and had conceived a great liking for him. Charles had just come up with a capital name from Shrewsbury, and Marston hoped that he would have done something; but no. Charles took

up with riding, rowing, driving, &c. &c., not to mention the giving and receiving of parties, with all the zest of a young fellow with a noble constitution, enough money, agreeable manners, and the faculty of excelling to a certain extent in every sport he took in hand.

He very soon got to like and respect Marston. He used to allow him to blow him up, and give him good advice when he wouldn't take it from any one else. The night before he went down Marston came to his rooms, and tried to persuade him to go home, and not to "the training stables," as he irreverently called Ranford; but Charles had laughed and laughed, and joked, and given indirect answers, and Marston saw that he was determined, and discontinued pressing him.

CHAPTER IX.

ADELAIDE.

THE next afternoon Lord Welter and Charles rode up to the door at Ranford. The servants looked surprised; they were not expected. His lordship was out shooting; her ladyship was in the poultry-yard; Mr. Pool was in the billiard-room with Lord Saltire.

"The deuce!" said Lord Welter; "that's lucky. I'll get him to break it to the governor."

The venerable nobleman was very much amused by the misfortunes of these ingenuous youths, and undertook the commission with great good nature. But, when he heard the cause of the mishap, he altered his tone considerably, and took on himself to give the young men what was for him a severe lecture. He was sorry this had come out of a drunken riot; he wished it * * * * which, though bad enough, did not carry the disgrace with it that the other did. Let them take the advice of an old fellow who had lived in the world, ay, and moved with the world, for above eighty years, and take care not to be marked, even among their own set, as drinking men. In his day, he allowed, drinking was entirely *de rigueur;* and indeed nothing could be

more proper and correct than the whole thing they had just described to him, if it had happened fifty years ago. But now a drunken row was an anachronism. Nobody drank now. He had made a point of watching the best young fellows, and none of them drank. He made a point of taking the time from the rising young fellows, as every one ought to, who wished to go with the world. In his day, for instance, it was the custom to talk with considerable freedom on sacred subjects, and he himself had been somewhat notorious for that sort of thing; but look at him now: he conformed with the times, and went to church. Every one went to church now. Let him call their attention to the fact that a great improvement had taken place in public morals of late years.

So the good-natured old heathen gave them what, I daresay, he thought was the best of advice. He is gone now to see what his system of morality is worth. I am very shy of judging him, or the men of his time. It gives me great pain to hear the men of the revolutionary era spoken of flippantly. The time was so exceptional. The men of that time were a race of giants. One wonders how the world got through that time at all. Six hundred millions of treasure spent by Britain alone! How many millions of lives lost none may guess. What wonder if there were hell-fire clubs and all kinds of monstrosities. Would any of the present generation have attended the fête of the goddess of reason, if they had lived at that time, I wonder? Of course they wouldn't.

Charles went alone to the poultry-yard; but no one was there except the head keeper, who was administering medicine to a cock, whose appearance was indictable—that is to say, if the laws against cock-fighting were enforced. Lady Ascot had gone in; so Charles went in too, and went upstairs to his aunt's room.

One of the old lady's last fancies was sitting in the dark, or in a gloom so profound as to approach to darkness. So Charles, passing out of a light corridor, and shutting the door behind him, found himself unable to see his hand before him. Confident, however, of his knowledge of localities, he advanced with such success that he immediately fell crashing headlong over an ottoman; and in his descent, imagining that he was falling into a pit or gulf of unknown depth, uttered a wild cry of alarm. Whereupon the voice of Lady Ascot from close by answered, "Come in," as if she thought she'd heard somebody knock.

"Come up, would be more appropriate, aunt," said Charles. "Why do you sit in the dark? I've killed myself, I believe."

"Is that you, Charles?" said she. "What brings you over? My dear, I am delighted. Open a bit of the window, Charles, and let me see you."

Charles did as he was desired; and, as the strong light from without fell upon him, the old lady gave a deep sigh.

"Ah, dear, so like poor dear Petre about the eyes. There never was a handsome Ravenshoe since him, and

there never will be another. You were quite tolerable as a boy, my dear; but you've got very coarse, very coarse and plain indeed. Poor Petre!"

"You're more unlucky in the light than you were in the darkness, Charles," said a brisk, clear, well-modulated voice from behind the old lady. "Grandma seems in one of her knock-me-down moods to-day. She had just told me that I was an insignificant chit, when you made your graceful and noiseless entrance, and saved me anything further."

If Adelaide had been looking at Charles when she spoke, instead of at her work, she would have seen the start which he gave when he heard her voice. As it was, she saw nothing of it; and Charles, instantly recovering himself, said in the most nonchalant voice possible:

"Hallo, are you here? How do you contrive to work in the dark?"

"It is not dark to any one with eyes," was the curt reply. "I can see to read."

Here Lady Ascot said that, if she had called Adelaide a chit, it was because she had set up her opinion against that of such a man as Dr. Going; that Adelaide was a good and dutiful girl to her; that she was a very old woman, and perhaps shouldn't live to see the finish of next year; and that her opinion still was that Charles was very plain and coarse, and she was sorry she couldn't alter it.

Adelaide came rapidly up and kissed her, and then went and stood in the light beside Charles.

She had grown into a superb blonde beauty. From her rich brown crêpé hair to her exquisite little foot, she was a model of grace. The nose was delicately aquiline, and the mouth receded slightly, while the chin was as slightly prominent; the eyes were brilliant, and were concentrated on their object in a moment; and the eyebrows surmounted them in a delicately but distinctly marked curve. A beauty she was, such as one seldom sees; and Charles, looking on her, felt that he loved her more madly than ever, and that he would die sooner than let her know it.

"Well, Charles," she said, "you don't seem overjoyed to see me."

"A man can't look joyous with broken shins, my dear Adelaide. Aunt, I've got some bad news for you. I am in trouble."

"Oh dear," said the old lady, "and what is the matter now? Something about a woman, I suppose. You Ravenshoes are always—"

"No, no, aunt. Nothing of the kind. Adelaide, don't go, pray; you will lose such a capital laugh. I've got rusticated, aunt."

"That is very comical, I dare say," said Adelaide, in a low voice; "but I don't see the joke."

"I thought you would have had a laugh at me, perhaps," said Charles; "it is rather a favourite amusement of yours."

"What, in the name of goodness, makes you so disagreeable and cross, to-day, Charles? You were never

so before, when anything happened. I am sure I am very sorry for your misfortune, though I really don't know its extent. Is it a very serious thing?"

"Serious, very. I don't much like going home. Welter is in the same scrape; who is to tell her?"

"This is the way," said Adelaide, "I'll show you how to manage her."

All this was carried on in a low tone, and very rapidly. The old lady had just begun in a loud, querulous, scolding voice to Charles, when Adelaide interrupted her with—

"I say, grandma, Welter is rusticated too."

Adelaide good-naturedly said this to lead the old lady's wrath from Charles, and throw it partly on to her grandson; but, however good her intentions, the execution of them was unsuccessful. The old lady fell to scolding Charles; accusing him of being the cause of the whole mishap, of leading Welter into every mischief, and stating her opinion that he was an innocent and exemplary youth, with the fault only of being too easily led away. Charles escaped as soon as he could, and was followed by Adelaide.

"This is not true, is it?" she said. "It is not your fault?"

"My fault, partly, of course. But Welter would have been sent down before, if it hadn't been for me. He got me into the scrape this time. He mustn't go back there. You must'n't let him go back."

"I let him go back, forsooth! What on earth can I

have to do with his lordship's movements?" she said bitterly. "Do you know who you are talking to?—a beggarly orphan."

"Hush! don't talk like that, Adelaide. Your power in this house is very great. The power of the only sound head in the house. You could stop anything you liked from happening."

They had come together at a conservatory door; and she put her back against it, and held up her hand to bespeak his attention more particularly.

"I wish it was true, Charles; but it isn't. No one has any power over Lord Ascot. Is Welter much in debt?"

"I should say, a great deal," was Charles's reply. "I think I ought to tell you. You may help him to break it to them."

"Ay, he always comes to me for that sort of thing. Always did from a child. I'll tell you what, Charles, there's trouble coming or come on this house. Lord Ascot came home from Chester looking like death; they say he lost fearfully both there and at Newmarket. He came home quite late, and went up to grandma; and there was a dreadful scene. She hasn't been herself since. Another blow like it will kill her. I suspect my lord's bare existence depends on this colt winning the Derby. Come and see it gallop," she added, suddenly throwing her flashing eyes upon his, and speaking with an animation and rapidity very different from the cold stern voice in which she had been telling the

family troubles. "Come, and let us have some oxygen. I have not spoken to a man for a month. I have been leading a life like a nun's; no, worse than any nun's; for I have been bothered and humiliated by—ah! such wretched trivialities. Go and order horses. I will join you directly."

So she dashed away and left him, and he hurried to the yard. Scarcely were the horses ready when she was back again, with the same stern, cold expression on her face, now more marked, perhaps, from the effect of the masculine habit she wore. She was a consummate horsewoman, and rode the furious black Irish mare, which was brought out for her, with ease and self-possession, seeming to enjoy the rearing and plunging of the sour-tempered brute far more than Charles, her companion, did, who would rather have seen her on a quieter horse.

A sweeping gallop under the noble old trees, through a deep valley, and past a herd of deer, which scudded away through the thick-strewn leaves, brought them to the great stables, a large building at the edge of the park, close to the downs. Twenty or thirty long-legged elegant, nonchalant-looking animals, covered to the tips of their ears with cloths, and ridden each by a queer-looking brown-faced lad, were in the act of returning from their afternoon exercise. These Adelaide's mare, "Molly Asthore," charged and dispersed like a flock of sheep; and then, Adelaide pointing with her whip to the downs, hurried past the stables towards a group they saw a little distance off.

There were only four people—Lord Ascot, the stud groom, and two lads. Adelaide was correctly informed; they were going to gallop the Voltigeur colt (since called Haphazard), and the cloths were now coming off him. Lord Ascot and the stud groom mounted their horses, and joined our pair, who were riding slowly along the measured mile the way the horse was to come.

Lord Ascot looked very pale and worn; he gave Charles a kindly greeting, and made a joke with Adelaide; but his hands fidgeted with his reins, and he kept turning back towards the horse they had left, wondering impatiently what was keeping the boy. At last they saw the beautiful beast shake his head, give two or three playful plunges, and then come striding rapidly towards them, over the short, springy turf.

Then they turned, and rode full speed: soon they heard the mighty hollow-sounding hoofs behind, that came rapidly towards them, devouring space. Then the colt rushed by them in his pride, with his chin on his chest, hard held, and his hind feet coming forward under his girth every stride, and casting the turf behind him in showers. Then Adelaide's horse, after a few mad plunges, bolted, overtook the colt, and actually raced him for a few hundred yards; then the colt was pulled up on a breezy hill, and they all stood a little together talking and congratulating one another on the beauty of the horse.

Charles and Adelaide rode away together over the downs, intending to make a little détour, and so lengthen

their ride. They had had no chance of conversation since they parted at the conservatory door, and they took it up nearly where they had left it. Adelaide began, and, I may say, went on, too, as she had most of the talking.

"I should like to be a duchess; then I should be mistress of the only thing I am afraid of."

"What is that?"

"Poverty," said she; "that is my only terror, and that is my inevitable fate."

"I should have thought, Adelaide, that you were too high-spirited to care for that, or anything."

"Ah, you don't know; all my relations are poor. *I* know what it is; *I* know what it would be for a beauty like me."

"You will never be poor or friendless while Lady Ascot lives."

"How long will that be? My home now depends very much on that horse; oh, if I were only a man, I would welcome poverty; it would force me to action."

Charles blushed. Not many days before, Marston and he had had a battle royal, in which the former had said, that the only hope for Charles was that he should go two or three times without his dinner, and be made to earn it, and that as long as he had a "mag" to bless himself with, he would always be a lazy, useless humbug; and now here was a young lady uttering the same atrocious sentiments. He called attention to the prospect.

Three hundred feet below them, Father Thames was

winding along under the downs and yellow woodlands, past chalk quarry and grey farm-house, blood-red beneath the setting sun; a soft, rich, autumnal haze was over everything; the smoke from the distant village hung like a curtain of pearl across the valley; and the long, straight, dark wood that crowned the high grey wold, was bathed in a dim purple mist, on its darkest side; and to perfect the air of dreamy stillness, some distant bells sent their golden sound floating on the peaceful air. It was a quiet day in the old age of the year; and its peace seemed to make itself felt on these two wild young birds; for they were silent more than half the way home; and then Charles said, in a low voice—

"Dear Adelaide, I hope you have chosen aright. The time will come when you will have to make a more important decision than any you have made yet. At one time in a man's or woman's life, they say, there is a choice between good and evil. In God's name, think before you make it."

"Charles," she said, in a low and disturbed voice, "if a conjuror were to offer to show you your face in a glass, as it would be ten years hence, should you have courage to look?"

"I suppose so; would not you?"

"Oh, no, no, no! How do you know what horrid thing would look at you, and scare you to death? Ten years hence; where shall we be then?"

CHAPTER X.

LADY ASCOT'S LITTLE NAP.

THERE was a very dull dinner at Ranford that day. Lord Ascot scarcely spoke a word; he was kind and polite—he always was that—but he was very different from his usual self. The party missed his jokes; which, though feeble and sometimes possibly "rather close to the wind," served their purpose, served to show that the maker of them was desirous to make himself agreeable to the best of his ability. He never laughed once during dinner, which was very unusual. It was evident that Lord Saltire had performed his commission, and Charles was afraid that he was furiously angry with Welter; but, on one occasion, when the latter looked up suddenly and asked him some question, his father answered him kindly in his usual tone of voice, and spoke to him so for some time.

Lady Ascot was a host in herself. With a noble self-sacrifice, she, at the risk of being laughed at, resolved to attract attention by airing some of her most remarkable opinions. She accordingly attacked Lord Saltire on the subject of the end of the world, putting its total destruction by fire at about nine months from that time. Lord Saltire had no opinion to offer on the probability

of Dr. Going's theory, but sincerely hoped that it might last his time, and that he might be allowed to get out of the way in the ordinary manner. He did not for a moment doubt the correctness of her calculations; but he put it to her as a woman of the world, whether or no such an occurrence as she described would not be in the last degree awkward and disconcerting?

Adelaide said she didn't believe a word of it, and nothing should induce her to do so until it took place. This brought the old lady's wrath down upon her and helped the flagging conversation on a little. But, after dinner, it got so dull in spite of every one's efforts, that Lord Saltire confided to his young friend, as they went upstairs, that he had an idea that something was wrong; but at all events, that the house was getting so insufferably dull that he must rat, pardieu, for he couldn't stand it. He should rat into Devon to his friend Lord Segur.

Welter took occasion to tell Charles that Lord Ascot had sent for him, and told him that he knew all about what had happened, and his debts. That he did not wish the subject mentioned (as if I were likely to talk about it!); that his debts should, if possible, be paid. That he had then gone on to say, that he did not wish to say anything harsh to Welter on the subject—that he doubted whether he retained the right of reproving his son. That they both needed forgiveness one from the other, and that he hoped in what was to follow they would display that courtesy and mutual forbearance to

one another which gentlemen should. "And what the deuce does he mean, eh? He never spoke like this before. Is he going to marry again? Ay, that's what it is, depend upon it," said this penetrating young gentleman; "that will be rather a shame of him, you know, particularly if he has two or three cubs to cut into my fortune;" and so from that time Lord Welter began to treat his father with a slight coolness, and an air of injured innocence most amusing, though painful, to Charles and Adelaide, who knew the truth.

As for Adelaide, she seemed to treat Charles like a brother once more. She kept no secret from him; she walked with him, rode with him, just as of old. She did not seem to like Lord Welter's society, though she was very kind to him; and he seemed too much taken up with his dogs and horses to care much for her. So Charles and she were thrown together, and Charles's love for her grew stronger day by day, until that studied indifferent air which he had assumed on his arrival became almost impossible to sustain. He sustained it, nevertheless, treating Adelaide almost with rudeness, and flinging about his words so carelessly, that sometimes she would look suddenly up indignant, and make some passionate reply, and sometimes she would rise and leave the room —for aught I know, in tears.

It was a sad house to stay in; and his heart began to yearn for his western home in spite of Adelaide. After a short time came a long letter from his father, a scolding loving letter, in which Densil showed plainly that he

was trying to be angry, and could not, for joy at having his son home with him—and concluded by saying that he should never allude to the circumstance again, and by praying him to come back at once from that wicked, cock-fighting, horse-racing, Ranford. There was an inclosure for Lord Saltire, the reading of which caused his lordship to take a great deal of snuff, in which he begged him, for old friendship's sake, to send his boy home to him, as he had once sent him home to his father. And so Lord Saltire appeared in Charles's dressing-room before dinner one day, and, sitting down, said that he was come to take a great liberty, and, in fact, was rather presuming on his being an old man, but he hoped that his young friend would not take it amiss from a man old enough to be his grandfather, if he recommended him to leave that house, and go home to his father's. Ranford was a most desirable house in every way; but, at the same time, it was what he believed the young men of the day called a fast house; and he would not conceal from his young friend that his father had requested him to use his influence to make him return home; and he did beg his old friend's son to believe that he was actuated by the best of motives.

"Dear Lord Saltire," said Charles, taking the old man's hand; "I am going home to-morrow; and you don't know how heartily I thank you for the interest you always take in me."

"I know nothing," said Lord Saltire, "more pleasing to a battered old fellow like myself than to contemplate

the ingenuousness of youth, and you must allow me to say that your ingenuousness sits uncommonly well upon you—in fact, is very becoming. I conceived a considerable interest in you the first time I saw you, on that very account. I should like to have had a son like you, but it was not to be. I had a son, who was all that could be desired by the most fastidious person, brought up in a far better school than mine; but he got shot in his first duel, at one-and-twenty. I remember to have been considerably annoyed at the time," continued the old gentleman, taking a pinch of snuff, and looking steadily at Charles without moving a muscle, "but I dare say it was all for the best; he might have run in debt, or married a woman with red hair, or fifty things. Well, I wish you good day, and beg your forgiveness once more for the liberty I have taken."

Charles slipped away from the dinner-table early that evening, and, while Lady Ascot was having her after-dinner nap, had a long conversation with Adelaide in the dark, which was very pleasant to one of the parties concerned, at any rate.

"Adelaide, I am going home to-morrow."

"Are you really? Are you going so suddenly?"

"I am, positively. I got a letter from home to-day. Are you very sorry or very glad?"

"I am very sorry, Charles. You are the only friend I have in the world to whom I can speak as I like. Make me a promise."

"Well?"

"This is the last night we shall be together. Promise that you won't be rude and sarcastic as you are sometimes—almost always, now, to poor me—but talk kindly, as we used to do."

"Very well," said Charles. "And you promise you won't be taking such a black view of the state of affairs as you do in general. Do you remember the conversation we had the day the colt was tried?"

"I remember."

"Well, don't talk like that, you know."

"I won't promise that. The time will come very soon when we shall have no more pleasant talks together."

"When will that be?"

"When I am gone out for a governess."

"What wages will you get? You will not get so much as some girls, because you are so pretty and so wilful, and you will lead them such a deuce of a life."

"Charles, you said you wouldn't be rude."

"I choose to be rude. I have been drinking wine, and we are in the dark, and aunt is asleep and snoring, and I shall say just what I like."

"I'll wake her."

"I should like to see you. What shall we talk about? What an old Roman Lord Saltire is. He talked about his son who was killed, to me to-day, just as I should talk about a pointer dog."

"Then he thought he had been showing some signs

of weakness. He always speaks of his son like that when he thinks he has been betraying some feeling."

"I admire him for it," said Charles.—"So you are going to be a governess, eh?"

"I suppose so."

"Why don't you try being barmaid at a public-house? Welter would get you a place directly; he has great influence in the licensed victualling way. You might come to marry a commercial traveller, for anything you know."

"I would not have believed this," she said, in a fierce, low voice. "You have turned against me and insult me, because——Unkind, unjust, ungentlemanlike."

He heard her passionately sobbing in the dark, and the next moment he had her in his arms, and was covering her face with kisses.

"Lie there, my love," he said; "that is your place. All the world can't harm or insult my Adelaide while she is there. Why did you fly from me and repulse me my darling, when I told you I was your own true love?"

"Oh, let me go, Charles," she said, trying, ever so feebly, to repulse him. "Dear Charles, pray do; I am frightened."

"Not till you tell me you love me, false one."

"I love you more than all the world."

"Traitress! And why did you repulse me and laugh at me?"

"I did not think you were in earnest."

"Another kiss for that wicked, wicked falsehood

Do you know that this rustication business has all come from the despair consequent on your wicked behaviour the other day?"

"You said Welter caused it, Charles. But oh, please let me go."

"Will you go as a governess now?"

"I will do nothing but what you tell me."

"Then give me one, your own, own self, and I will let you go."

Have the reader's feelings of horror, indignation, astonishment, outraged modesty, or ridicule, given him time to remember that all this went on in the dark, within six feet of an unconscious old lady? Such, however, was the case. And scarcely had Adelaide determined that it was time to wake her, and barely had she bent over her for that purpose, when the door was thrown open, and—enter attendants with lights. Now, if the reader will reflect a moment, he will see what an awful escape they had; for the chances were about a thousand to one in favour of two things having happened: 1st, the groom of the chambers might have come into the room half a minute sooner; and 2d, they might have sat as they were half a minute longer; in either of which cases, Charles would have been discovered with his arm round Adelaide's waist, and a fearful scandal would have been the consequence. And I mention this as a caution to young persons in general, and to remind them that, if they happen to be sitting hand in hand, it is no use to jump apart and look very

red just as the door opens, because the incomer can see what they have been about as plain as if he had been there. On this occasion, also, Charles and Adelaide set down as usual to their own sagacity what was the result of pure accident.

Adelaide was very glad to get away after tea, for she felt rather guilty and confused. On Charles's offering to go, however, Lady Ascot, who had been very silent and glum all tea-time, requested him to stay, as she had something serious to say to him. Which set that young gentleman speculating whether she could possibly have been awake before the advent of candles, and caused him to await her pleasure with no small amount of trepidation.

Her ladyship began, by remarking that digitalis was invaluable for palpitation, and that she had also found camomile, combined with gentle purgatives, efficient for the same thing, when suspected to proceed from stomach. She opined that, if this weather continued, there would be heavy running for the Cambridgeshire, and Commissioner would probably stand as well as any horse. And then, having, like a pigeon, taken a few airy circles through stable-management, theology, and agriculture, she descended on her subject, and frightened Charles out of his five wits, by asking him if he didn't think Adelaide a very nice girl.

Charles decidedly thought she was a very nice girl; but he rather hesitated, and said—"Yes, that she was charming."

"Now, tell me, my dear," said Lady Ascot, manœuvring a great old fan, "for young eyes are quicker than old ones. Did you ever remark anything between her and Welter?"

Charles caught up one of his legs, and exclaimed, "The devil!"

"What a shocking expression, my dear! Well, I agree with you. I fancy I have noticed that they entertained a decided preference for one another. Of course, Welter will be throwing himself away, and all that sort of thing, but he is pretty sure to do that. I expect every time he comes home, that he will bring a wife from behind the bar of a public-house. Now, Adelaide—"

"Aunt! Lady Ascot! Surely you are under a mistake. I never saw anything between them."

"H'm."

"I assure you I never did. I never heard Welter speak of her in that sort of way, and I don't think she cares for him."

"What reason have you for thinking *that?*"

"Well—why, you know it's hard to say. The fact is, I have rather a partiality for Adelaide myself, and I have watched her in the presence of other men."

"Oho! Do you think she cares for you? Do you know she won't have a sixpence?"

"We shall have enough to last till next year, aunt; and then the world is to come to an end, you know, and we shan't want anything."

"Never you mind about the world, sir. Don't you be flippant and impertinent, sir. Don't evade my question, sir. Do you think Adelaide cares for you, sir?"

Charles looked steadily and defiantly at his aunt, and asked her whether she didn't think it was very difficult to find out what a girl's mind really was—whereby we may conclude that he was profiting by Lord Saltire's lesson on the command of feature.

"This is too bad, Charles," broke out Lady Ascot, "to put me off like this, after your infamous and audacious conduct of this evening—after kissing and hugging that girl under my very nose—"

"I thought it!" said Charles, with a shout of laughter. "I thought it, you were awake all the time!"

"I was not awake all the time, sir—"

"You were awake quite long enough, it appears, aunty. Now, what do you think of it?"

At first Lady Ascot would think nothing of it, but that the iniquity of Charles's conduct was only to be equalled by the baseness and ingratitude of Adelaide's; but by degrees she was brought to think that it was possible that some good might come of an engagement; and, at length, becoming garrulous on this point, it leaked out by degrees, that she had set her heart on it for years, that she had noticed for some time Charles's partiality for her with the greatest pleasure, and recently had feared that something had disturbed it. In short, that it was her pet scheme, and that she had been coming to an explanation that very night, but had been anticipated.

CHAPTER XI.

GIVES US AN INSIGHT INTO CHARLES'S DOMESTIC RELATIONS, AND SHOWS HOW THE GREAT CONSPIRATOR SOLILOQUIZED TO THE GRAND CHANDELIER.

IT may be readily conceived that a considerable amount of familiarity existed between Charles and his servant and foster-brother William. But, to the honour of both of them be it said, there was more than this—a most sincere and hearty affection; a feeling for one another which, we shall see, lasted through everything. Till Charles went to Shrewsbury he had never had another playfellow. He and William had been allowed to paddle about on the sand, or ride together on the moor, as they would, till a boy's friendship had arisen, sufficiently strong to obliterate all considerations of rank between them. This had grown with age, till William had become his confidential agent at home during his absence, and Charles had come to depend very much on his account of the state of things at head-quarters. He had also another confidential agent, to whom we shall be immediately introduced. She, however, was of another sex and rank.

William's office was barely a pleasant one. His affection for his master led him most faithfully to attend to his interests; and, as a Catholic, he was often

brought into collision with Father Mackworth, who took a laudable interest in Charles's affairs, and considered himself injured on two or three occasions by the dogged refusal of William to communicate the substance and result of a message forwarded through William, from Shrewsbury, to Densil, which seemed to cause the old gentleman some thought and anxiety. William's religious opinions, however, had got to be somewhat loose, and to sit somewhat easily upon him, more particularly since his sojourn at Oxford. He had not very long ago confided to Charles, in a private sitting, that the conviction which was strong on his mind was that Father Mackworth was not to be trusted, God forgive him for saying so; and, on being pressed by Charles to state why, he point-blank refused to give any reason whatever, but repeated his opinion with redoubled emphasis. Charles had a great confidence in William's shrewdness, and forbore to press him, but saw that something had occurred which had impressed the above conviction on William's mind most strongly.

He had been sent from Oxford to see how the land lay at home, and had met Charles at the Rose and Crown, at Stonnington, with saddle horses. No sooner were they clear of the town than William, without waiting for Charles's leave, put spurs to his horse and rode up alongside of him.

"What is your news, William?"

"Nothing very great. Master looks bothered and worn."

"About this business of mine."

"The priest goes on talking about it, and plaguing him with it, when he wants to forget it."

"The deuce take him! He talks about me a goo deal."

"Yes; he has begun about you again. Master wouldn't stand it the other day, and told him to hold his tongue, just like his own self. Tom heard him. They made it up afterwards, though."

"What did Cuthbert say?"

"Master Cuthbert spoke up for you, and said he hoped there wasn't going to be a scene, and that you weren't coming to live in disgrace, for that would be punishing every one in the house for you."

"How's Mary?"

"She's well. Master don't trust her out of his sight much. They will never set him against you while she is there. I wish you would marry her, Master Charles, if you can give up the other one."

Charles laughed and told him he wasn't going to do anything of the sort. Then he asked, "Any visitors?"

"Ay; one. Father Tiernay, a stranger."

"What sort of man?"

"A real good one. I don't think our man likes him, though."

They had now come to the moor's edge, and were looking down on the amphitheatre which formed the domain of Ravenshoe. Far and wide the tranquil sea, vast, dim, and grey, flooded bay and headland, cave and

islet. Beneath their feet slept the winter woodlands; from whose brown bosom rose the old house, many-gabled, throwing aloft from its chimneys hospitable columns of smoke, which hung in the still autumn air, and made a hazy cloud on the hill-side. Everything was so quiet that they could hear the gentle whisper of the ground-swell, and the voices of the children at play upon the beach, and the dogs barking in the kennels.

"How calm and quiet old home looks, William," said Charles; "I like to get back here after Oxford."

"No wine parties here. No steeple-chases. No bloomer balls," said William.

"No! and no chapels and lectures, and being sent for by the Dean," said Charles.

"And none of they dratted bones, neither," said William, with emphasis.

"Ahem! why, no! Suppose we ride on."

So they rode down the road through the woodland to the lodge, and so through the park—sloping steeply up on their left, with many a clump of oak and holly, and many a broad patch of crimson fern. The deer stood about in graceful groups, while the bucks belled and rattled noisily, making the thorn-thickets echo with the clatter of their horns. The rabbits scudded rapidly across the road; and the blackbird fled screaming from the mountain ash tree, now all afire with golden fruit. So they passed on until a sudden sweep brought them upon the terrace between the old grey house and the murmuring sea.

Charles jumped off, and William led the horses round to the stable. A young lady in a straw hat and brown gloves, with a pair of scissors and a basket, standing half-way up the steps, came down to meet him, dropping the basket, and holding out the brown gloves before her. This young lady he took in his arms, and kissed; and she, so far from resenting the liberty, after she was set on her feet again, held him by both hands, and put up a sweet dark face towards his, as if she wouldn't care if he kissed her again. Which he immediately did.

It was not a very pretty face, but oh! such a calm, quiet, pleasant one. There was scarcely a good feature in it, and yet the whole was so gentle and pleasing, and withal so shrewd and *espiègle*, that to look at it once was to think about it till you looked again; and to look again was to look as often as you had a chance, and to like the face the more each time you looked. I said there was not a good feature in the face. Well, I misled you; there was a pair of calm, honest, black eyes, a very good feature indeed, and which, once seen, you were not likely to forget. And also, when I tell you that this face and eyes belonged to the neatest, trimmest little figure imaginable, I hope I have done my work sufficiently well to make you envy that lucky rogue Charles, who, as we know, cares for no woman in the world but Adelaide, and who, between you and me, seems to be much too partial to this sort of thing.

"A thousand welcomes home, Charley," said the

pleasant little voice which belonged to this pleasant little personage. "Oh! I am so glad you're come."

"You'll soon wish me away again. I'll plague you."

"I like to be plagued by you, Charley. How is Adelaide?"

"Adelaide is all that the fondest lover could desire" (for they had no secrets, these two), "and either sent her love, or meant to do so."

"Charles, dearest," she said eagerly, "come and see him now! come and see him with me!"

"Where is he?"

"In the shrubbery, with Flying Childers."

"Is he alone?"

"All alone, except the dog."

"Where are *they?*"

"They are gone out coursing. Come on; they will be back in an hour, and the Rook never leaves him. Come, come."

It will be seen that these young folks had a tolerably good understanding with one another, and could carry on a conversation about "third parties" without even mentioning their names. We shall see how this came about presently; but, for the present, let us follow these wicked conspirators, and see in what deep plot they are engaged.

They passed rapidly along the terrace, and turned the corner of the house to the left, where the west front overhung the river glen, and the broad terraced garden went down step by step towards the brawling stream.

This they passed, and, opening an iron gate, came suddenly into a gloomy maze of shrubbery that stretched its long vistas up the valley.

Down one dark alley after another they hurried. The yellow leaves rustled beneath their feet, and all nature was pervaded with the smell of decay. It was hard to believe that these bare damp woods were the same as those they had passed through but four months ago, decked out with their summer bravery—an orchestra to a myriad birds. Here and there a bright berry shone out among the dull-coloured twigs, and a solitary robin quavered his soft melancholy song alone. The flowers were dead, the birds were flown or mute, and brave, green leaves were stamped under foot; everywhere decay, decay.

In the dampest, darkest walk of them all, in a far-off path, hedged with holly and yew, they found a bent and grey old man walking with a toothless, grey, old hound for his silent companion. And, as Charles moved forward with rapid elastic step, the old man looked up, and tottered to meet him, showing as he did so, the face of Densil Ravenshoe.

"Now, the Virgin be praised," he said, "for putting it in your head to come so quick, my darling. Whenever you go away now, I am in terror lest I should die and never see you again. I might be struck with paralysis, and not know you, my boy. Don't go away from me again."

"I should like never to leave you any more, father

dear. See how well you get on with my arm. Let us come out into the sun; why do you walk in this dismal wood?"

"Why?" said the old man, with sudden animation, his grey eye kindling as he stopped. "Why? I come here because I can catch sight of a woodcock, lad! I sprang one by that holly just before you came up. Flip flap, and away through the hollies like a ghost! Cuthbert and the priest are away coursing. Now you are come, surely I can get on the grey pony, and go up to see a hare killed. You'll lead him for me, won't you? I don't like to trouble *them*."

"We can go to-morrow, dad, after lunch, you and I, and William. We'll have Leopard and Blue-ruin—by George, it will be like old times again."

"And we'll take our little quiet bird on *her* pony, won't we?" said Densil, turning to Mary. "She's such a good little bird, Charley. We sit and talk of you many an hour. Charley, can't you get me down on the shore, and let me sit there? I got Cuthbert to take me down once; but Father Mackworth came and talked about the Immaculate Conception through his nose all the time. I didn't want to hear him talk; I wanted to hear the surf on the shore. Good man! he thought he interested me, I dare say."

"I hope he is very kind to you, father?"

"Kind! I assure you, my dear boy, he is the kindest creature; he never lets me out of his sight; and so attentive!"

"He'll have to be a little less attentive in future, confound him!" muttered Charles. "There he is; talk of the devil! Mary, my dear," he added aloud, "go and amuse the Rooks for a little, and let us have Cuthbert to ourselves."

The old man looked curious at the idea of Mary talking to the rooks; but his mind was drawn off by Charles having led him into a warm, southern corner, and set him down in the sun.

Mary did her errand well; for, in a few moments, Cuthbert advanced rapidly towards them. Coming up, he took Charles's hand, and shook it with a faint, kindly smile.

He had grown to be a tall and somewhat handsome young man—certainly handsomer than Charles. His face, even now he was warmed by exercise, was very pale, though the complexion was clear and healthy. His hair was slightly gone from his forehead, and he looked much older than he really was. The moment that the smile was gone his face resumed the expression of passionless calm that it had borne before; and, sitting down by his brother, he asked him how he did.

"I am as well, Cuthbert," said Charles, "as youth, health, a conscience of brass, and a whole world full of friends can make me. *I'm* all right, bless you. But you look very peaking and pale. Do you take exercise enough?"

"I? Oh, dear, yes. But I am very glad to see you, Charles. Our father misses you. Don't you, father?"

"Very much, Cuthbert."

"Yes. I bore him. I do, indeed. I don't take interest in the things he does; I can't; it's not my nature. You and he will be as happy as kings talking about salmon, and puppies, and colts."

"I know, Cuthbert; I know. You never cared about those things as we do."

"No, never, brother; and now less than ever. I hope you will stay with me—with us. You are my own brother. I will have you stay here," he continued, in a slightly raised voice; "and I desire that any opposition or impertinence you may meet with may be immediately reported to me."

"It will be immediately reported to those who use it, and in a way they won't like, Cuthbert. Don't you be afraid; I shan't quarrel. Tell me something about yourself, old boy."

"I can tell you but little to interest you, Charles. You are of this world, and rejoice in being so. I, day by day, wean myself more and more from it, knowing its worthlessness. Leave me to my books and my religious exercises, and go on your way. The time will come when your pursuits and pleasures will turn to bitter dust in your mouth, as mine never can. When the world is like a howling wilderness to you, as it will be soon, then come to me and I will show you where to find happiness. At present you will not listen to me."

"Not I," said Charles. "Youth, health, talent, like yours—are these gifts to despise?"

"They are clogs to keep me from higher things. Study, meditation, life in the past with those good men who have walked the glorious road before us—in these consist happiness. Ambition! I have one earthly ambition—to purge myself from earthly affections, so that, when I hear the cloister-gate close behind me for ever, my heart may leap with joy, and I may feel that I am in the antechamber of heaven."

Charles was deeply affected, and bent down his head. "Youth, love, friends, joy in this beautiful world—all to be buried between four dull white walls, my brother!"

"This beautiful earth, which is beautiful indeed—alas! how I love it still! shall become a burden to us in a few years. Love! the greater the love, the greater the bitterness. Charles, remember *that*, one day, will you, when your heart is torn to shreds? I shall have ceased to love you then more than any other fellow-creature; but remember my words. You are leading a life which can only end in misery, as even the teachers of the false and corrupt religion which you profess would tell you. If you were systematically to lead the life you do now, it were better almost that there were no future. You are not angry, Charles?"

There was such a spice of truth in what Cuthbert said that it would have made nine men in ten angry. I am pleased to record of my favourite Charles that he was not; he kept his head bent down, and groaned.

"Don't be hard on our boy, Cuthbert," said Densil;

"he is a good boy, though he is not like you. It has always been so in our family—one a devotee and the other a sportsman. Let us go in, boys; it gets chill."

Charles rose up, and, throwing his arm round his brother's neck, boisterously gave him a kiss on the cheek; then he began laughing and talking at the top of his voice, making the nooks and angles in the grey old façade echo with his jubilant voice.

Under the dark porch they found a group of three—Mackworth; a jolly-looking, round-faced, Irish priest, by name Tiernay; and Mary. Mackworth received Charles with a pleasant smile, and they joined in conversation together heartily. Few men could be more agreeable than Mackworth, and he chose to be agreeable now. Charles was insensibly carried away by the charm of his frank, hearty manner, and for a time forgot who was talking to him.

Mackworth and Charles were enemies. If we reflect a moment, we shall see that it could hardly be otherwise.

Charles's existence, holding, as he did, the obnoxious religion, was an offence to him. He had been prejudiced against him from the first; and, children not being very slow to find out who are well disposed towards them, or the contrary, Charles had early begun to regard the priest with distrust and dislike. So a distant, sarcastic line of treatment on the one hand, and childish insolence and defiance on the other, had grown at last into

something very like hatred on both sides. Every soul in the house adored Charles but the priest; and, on the other hand, the priest's authority and dignity were questioned by none but Charles. And, all these small matters being taken into consideration, it is not wonderful, I say, that Charles and the priest were not good friends even before anything had occurred to bring about an open rupture.

Charles and Mackworth seldom met of late years without a "sparring match;" on this day, however —partly owing, perhaps, to the presence of a jolly good-humoured Irish priest—they got through dinner pretty well. Charles was as brave as a lion, and, though by far the priest's inferior in scientific "sparring," had a rough, strong, effective method of fighting, which was by no means to be despised. His great strength lay in his being always ready for battle. As he used to tell his crony William, he would as soon fight as not; and often, when rebuked by Cuthbert for what he called insolence to the priest, he would exclaim, "I don't care; what did he begin at me for? If he lets me alone, I'll let him alone." And, seeing that he had been at continual war with the reverend gentleman for sixteen years or more, I think it speaks highly for the courage of both parties that neither had hitherto yielded. When Charles afterwards came to know what a terrible card the man had held in his hand, he was struck with amazement at his self-possession in not playing it, despite his interest.

Mackworth was hardly so civil after dinner as he was before; but Cuthbert was hoping that Charles and he would get on without a battle-royal, when a slight accident brought on a general engagement, and threw all his hopes to the ground. Densil and Mary had gone up to the drawing-room, and Charles, having taken as much wine as he cared for, rose from the table and sauntered towards the door, when Cuthbert quite innocently asked him where he was going.

Charles said also in perfect good faith that he was going to smoke a cigar, and talk to William.

Cuthbert asked him, Would he get William or one of them to give the grey colt a warm mash with some nitre in it; and Charles said he'd see it done for him himself; when, without warning or apparent cause, Father Mackworth said to Father Tiernay,

"This William is one of the grooms. A renegade, I fancy! I believe the fellow is a Protestant at heart. He and Mr. Charles Ravenshoe are very intimate; they keep up a constant correspondence when apart, I assure you."

Charles faced round instantly, and confronted his enemy with a smile on his lips; but he said not a word, trying to force Mackworth to continue.

"Why don't you leave him alone?" said Cuthbert.

"My dear Cuthbert," said Charles, "pray don't humiliate me by interceding; I assure you I am greatly amused. You see he doesn't speak to me; he addressed himself to Mr. Tiernay."

"I wished," said Mackworth, "to call Father Tiernay's attention, as a stranger to this part of the world, to the fact of a young gentleman's corresponding with an illiterate groom in preference to any member of his family."

"The reason I do it," said Charles, speaking to Tiernay, but steadily watching Mackworth to see if any of his shafts hit, "is to gain information. I like to know what goes on in my absence. Cuthbert here is buried in his books, and does not know everything."

No signs of flinching there. Mackworth sat with a scornful smile on his pale face, without moving a muscle.

"He likes to get information," said Mackworth, "about his village amours, I suppose. But, dear me, he can't know anything that the whole parish don't know. I could have told him that that poor deluded fool of an underkeeper was going to marry Mary Lee, after all that had happened. He will be dowering a wife for his precious favourite some day."

"My precious favourite, Father Tiernay," said Charles, still closely watching Mackworth, "is my foster-brother. He used to be a great favourite with our reverend friend; his pretty sister Ellen is so still, I believe."

This was as random an arrow as ever was shot, and yet it went home to the feather. Charles saw Mackworth give a start and bite his lip, and knew that he had smote him deep; he burst out laughing.

"With regard to the rest, Father Tiernay, any man who says that there was anything wrong between me

and Mary Lee tells, saving your presence, a lie. It's infernally hard if a man mayn't play at love-making with the whole village for a confidant, and the whole matter a merry joke, but one must be accused of all sorts of villainy. Isn't ours a pleasant household, Mr. Tiernay?"

Father Tiernay shook his honest sides with a wondering laugh, and said, "Faix it is. But I hope ye'll allow me to put matters right betune you two. Father Mackworth begun on the young man; he was going out to his dudeen as peaceful as an honest young gentleman should. And some of the best quality are accustomed to converse their grooms in the evening over their cigar. I myself can instance Lord Mountdown whose hospitality I have partook frequent. And I'm hardly aware of any act of parliament, brother, whereby a young man shouldn't kiss a pretty girl in the way of fun, as I've done myself, sure. Whist now, both on ye! I'll come with ye, ye heretic, and smoke a cigar meself."

"I call you to witness that he insulted me," said Mackworth, turning round from the window.

"I wish you had let him alone, Father," said Cuthbert peevishly; "we were getting on very happily till you began. Do go, Charles, and smoke your cigar with Father Tiernay."

"I am waiting to see if he wants any more," said Charles, with a laugh. "Come on, Father Tiernay, and I'll show you the miscreant, and his pretty sister, too, if you like."

"I wish he hadn't come home," said Cuthbert, as soon as he and Mackworth were alone together. "Why do you and he fight like cat and dog? You make me perfectly miserable. I know he is going to the devil, in a worldly point of view, and that his portion will be hell necessarily as a heretic; but I don't see why you should worry him to death, and make the house miserable to him."

"It is for his good."

"Nonsense," rejoined Cuthbert. "You make him hate you; and I don't think you ought to treat a son of this house in the way you treat him. You are under obligations to this house. Yes, you are. I won't be contradicted now. I will have my say when I am in this temper, and you know it. The devil is not dead yet by a long way, you see. Why do you rouse him?"

"Go on, go on."

"Yes, I will go on. I'm in my own house, I believe. By the eleven thousand virgins, more or less, of the holy St. Ursula, virgin and martyr, that brother of mine is a brave fellow. Why, he cares as much for you as for a little dog barking at him. And you're a noble enemy for any man. You'd better let him alone, I think; you won't get much out of him. Adieu."

"What queer wild blood there is in these Ravenshoes," said Mackworth to himself, when he was alone. "A younger hand than myself would have been surprised at Cuthbert's kicking after so much schooling. Not I. I shall never quite tame him, though he is

broken in enough for all practical purposes. He will be on his knees to-morrow for this. I like to make him kick; I shall do it sometimes for my amusement; he is so much easier managed after one of these tantrums. By Jove! I love the man better every day; he is one after my own heart. As for Charles, I hate him, and yet I like him after a sort. I like to break a pointless lance with that boy, and let him fancy he is my equal. It amuses me.

"I almost fancy that I could have fallen in love with that girl Ellen. I was uncommon near it. I must be very careful. What a wild hawk she is! What a magnificent move that was of hers, risking a prosecution for felony on one single throw, and winning. How could she have guessed that there was anything there? She couldn't have guessed it. It was an effort of genius. It was a splendid move.

"How nearly that pigheaded fool of a young nobleman has gone to upset my calculations. His namesake the chessplayer could not have done more mischief by his talents than his friend had by stupidity. I wish Lord Ascot would get ruined as quickly as possible, and then my friend would be safe out of the way. But he won't."

CHAPTER XII.

CONTAINING A SONG BY CHARLES RAVENSHOE, AND ALSO FATHER TIERNAY'S OPINION ABOUT THE FAMILY.

CHARLES and the good-natured Father Tiernay wandered out across the old court-yard, towards the stables—a pile of buildings in the same style as the house, which lay back towards the hill. The moon was full, although obscured by clouds, and the whole court-yard was bathed in a soft mellow light. They both paused for a moment to look at the fine old building, standing silent for a time; and then Charles startled the contemplative priest by breaking into a harsh scornful laugh, as unlike his own cheery Ha! Ha! as it was possible to be.

"What are you disturbing a gentleman's meditations in that way for?" said the Father. "Is them your Oxford manners? Give me ye'r cigar-case, ye haythen, if ye can't appreciate the beauties of nature and art combined—laughing like that at the cradle of your ancestors too."

Charles gave him the cigar-case, and trolled out in a rich bass voice—

"The old falcon's nest
Was built up on the crest
Of the cliff that hangs over the sea;
And the jackdaws and crows,
As every one knows,
Were confounded respectful to he, to he—e—e."

"Howld yer impudence, ye young heretic doggrel-writer; can't I see what ye are driving at?"

"But the falcon grew old,
And the nest it grew cold,
And the carrion birds they grew bolder;
So the jackdaws and crows,
Underneath his own nose,
Gave both the young falcons cold shoulder."

"Bedad," said the good-natured Irishman, "some one got hot shoulder to-day. Aren't ye ashamed of yourself, singing such ribaldry, and all the servants hearing ye?"

"Capital song, Father; only one verse more."

"The elder was quelled,
But the younger rebelled;
So he spread his wide wings and fled over the sea.
Said the jackdaws and crows,
'He'll be hanged I suppose,
But what in the deuce does that matter to we?'"

There was something in the wild, bitter tone in which he sang the last verse that made Father Tiernay smoke his cigar in silence as they sauntered across the yard, till Charles began again.

"Not a word of applause for my poor impromptu song? Hang it, I'd have applauded anything you sang."

"Don't be so reckless and bitter, Mr. Ravenshoe," said Tiernay, laying his hand on his shoulder. "I can feel for you, though there is so little in common between us. You might lead a happy, peaceful life if you were to come over to us; which you will do, if I know anything of my trade, in the same day that the sun turns pea-green. *Allons*, as we used to say over the water; let us continue our travels."

"Reckless! I am not reckless. The jolly old world is very wide, and I am young and strong. There will be a wrench when the tooth comes out; but it will soon be over, and the toothache will be cured."

Tiernay remained silent a moment, and then in an absent manner sang this line, in a sweet low voice—

"For the girl of my heart that I'll never see more."

"She must cast in her lot with me," said Charles. "Ay, and she will do it, too. She will follow me to the world's end, sir. Are you a judge of horses? What a question to ask of an Irishman! here are the stables."

The lads were bedding down, and all the great building was alive with the clattering of busy feet and the neighing of horses. The great Ravenshoe Stud was being tucked up for the night; and over that two thousand pounds' worth of horse-flesh at least six thousand pounds' worth of fuss was being made, under the superintendence of the stud groom, Mr. Dickson.

The physical appearance of Mr. Dickson was as

though you had taken an aged Newmarket jockey and put a barrel of oysters, barrel and all, inside his waistcoat. His face was thin; his thighs were hollow; calves to his legs he had none. He was all stomach. Many years had elapsed since he had been brought to the verge of dissolution by severe training; and since then all that he had eaten, or drunk, or done, had flown to his stomach, producing a tympanitic action in that organ, astounding to behold. In speech he was, towards his superiors, courteous and polite; towards his equals, dictatorial; towards his subordinates, abusive, not to say blasphemous. To this gentleman Charles addressed himself, inquiring if he had seen William: and he, with a lofty, though courteous, sense of injury, inquired, in a loud tone of voice, of the stable-men generally, if any one had seen Mr. Charles's pad-groom.

In a dead silence which ensued, one of the lads was ill-advised enough to say that he didn't exactly know where he was; which caused Mr. Dickson to remark that, if that was all he had to say, he had better go on with his work, and not make a fool of himself—which the man did, growling out something about always putting his foot in it.

"Your groom comes and goes pretty much as he likes, sir," said Mr. Dickson. "I don't consider him as under my orders. Had he been so, I should have felt it my duty to make complaint on more than one occasion; he is a little too much of the gentleman for *my* stable, sir."

"Of course, my good Dickson," interrupted Charles, "the fact of his being my favourite makes you madly jealous of him; that is not the question now. If you don't know where he is, be so good as to hold your tongue."

Charles was only now and then insolent and abrupt with servants, and they liked him the better for it. It was one of Cuthbert's rules to be coldly, evenly polite, and, as he thought, considerate to the whole household; and yet they did not like him half so well as Charles, who would sometimes, when anything went wrong, "kick up," what an intelligent young Irish footman used to call "the divvle's own shindy." Cuthbert, they knew, had no sympathy for them, but treated them, as he treated himself, as mere machines; while Charles had that infinite capacity of good-will which none are more quick to recognise than servants and labouring people. And on this occasion, though Mr. Dickson might have sworn a little more than usual after Charles's departure, yet his feeling, on the whole, was, that he was sorry for having vexed the young gentleman by sneering at his favourite.

But Charles, having rescued the enraptured Father Tiernay from the stable, and having listened somewhat inattentively to a long description of the Curragh of Kildare, led the worthy priest round the back of the stables, up a short path through the wood, and knocked at the door of a long, low keeper's lodge, which stood within a stone's throw of the other buildings, in an

open, grassy glade, through which flowed a musical, slender stream of water. In one instant, night was hideous with rattling chains and barking dogs, who made as though they would tear the intruders to pieces; all except one foolish pointer pup, who was loose, and who, instead of doing his duty by barking, came feebly up, and cast himself on his back at their feet, as though they were the car of Juggernaut, and he was a candidate for paradise. Finding that he was not destroyed, he made a humiliating feint of being glad to see them, and nearly overthrew the priest by getting between his legs. But Charles, finding that his second summons was unanswered, lifted the latch, and went into the house.

The room they entered was dark, or nearly so, and at the first moment appeared empty; but, at the second glance, they made out that a figure was kneeling before the dying embers of a fire, and trying to kindle a match by blowing on the coals.

"Hullo!" said Charles.

"William, my boy," said a voice which made the priest start, "where have you been, lad?"

At the same moment a match was lit, and then a candle; as the light blazed up, it fell on the features of a greyheaded old man, who was peering through the darkness at them, and the priest cried, "Good God! Mr. Ravenshoe!"

The likeness for one moment was very extraordinary; but, as the eye grew accustomed to the light, one saw

that the face was the face of a taller man than Densil, and one, too, who wore the dress of a gamekeeper. Charles laughed at the priest, and said—

"You were struck, as many have been, by the likeness. He has been so long with my father that he has the very trick of his voice, and the look of the eye. Where have you been to-night, James?" he added affectionately. "Why do you go out so late alone? If any of those mining rascals were to be round poaching, you might be killed."

"I can take care of myself yet, Master Charles," said the old man, laughing; and, to do him justice, he certainly looked as if he could.

"Where is Nora?"

"Gone down to young James Holby's wife; she is lying-in."

"Pretty early, too. Where's Ellen?"

"Gone up to the house."

"See, Father, I shall be disappointed in showing you the belle of Ravenshoe; and now you will go back to Ireland, fancying you can compete with us."

Father Tiernay was beginning a story about five Miss Moriartys, who were supposed to rival in charms and accomplishments any five young ladies in the world, when his eye was attracted by a stuffed hare in a glass case, of unusual size and very dark colour.

"That, sir," said James, the keeper, in a bland, polite, explanatory tone of voice, coming and leaning over him, "is old Mrs. Jewel, that lived in the last cottage on the

right hand side, under the cliff. I always thought it had been Mrs. Simpson, but it was not. I shot this hare on the Monday, not three hundred yards from Mrs. Jewel's house; and on the Wednesday the neighbours noticed the shutters hadn't been down for two days, and broke the door open; and there she was, sure enough, dead in her bed. I had shot her as she was coming home from some of her devilries. A quiet old soul she was, though. No, I never thought it had been she."

It would be totally impossible to describe the changes through which the broad, sunny face of Father Tiernay went, during the above astounding narration; horror, astonishment, inquiry, and humour were so strangely blended. He looked into the face of the old gamekeeper, and met the expression of a man who had mentioned an interesting fact, and had contributed to the scientific experience of the listener. He looked at Charles, and met no expression whatever; but the latter said—

"Our witches in these parts, Father, take the form of some inferior animal when attending their Sabbath or general meetings, which I believe are presided over by an undoubted gentleman, who is not generally named in polite society. In this case, the old woman was caught sneaking home under the form of a hare, and promptly rolled over by James; and here she is."

Father Tiernay said, "Oh, indeed!" but looked as if he thought the more.

"And there's another of them out now, sir," said the

keeper; "and, Master Charles dear, if you're going to take the greyhounds out to-morrow, do have a turn at that big black hare under Birch Tor—"

"A black hare!" said Father Tiernay, aghast.

"Nearly coal-black, your reverence," said James. "She's a witch, your reverence, and who she is the blessed saints only know. I've seen her three or four times. If the master was on terms with Squire Humby to Hele, we might have the harriers over and run her down. But that can't be, in course. If you take Blue-ruin and Lightning out to-morrow, Master Charles, and turn her out of the brambles under the rocks, and leave the Master and Miss Mary against the corner of the stone wall to turn her down the gully, you must have her."

The look of astonishment had gradually faded from Father Tiernay's face. It is said, that one of the great elements of power in the Roman Catholic priesthood, is that they can lend themselves to any little bit of—well, of mild deception—which happens to be going. Father Tiernay was up to the situation. He looked from the keeper to Charles with a bland and stolid expression of face, and said—

"If she is a witch, mark my words, the dogs will never touch her. The way would be to bite up a crooked sixpence and fire at her with that. I shall be there to see the sport. I never hunted a witch yet."

"Has your reverence ever seen a white polecat?" said the keeper.

"No, never," said the priest; "I have heard of them

though. My friend, Mr. Moriarty, of Castledown (not Mountdown Castle, ye understand; that is the sate of my lord Mountdown, whose blessed mother was a Moriarty, the heavens be her bed), claimed to have seen one; but, bedad, no one else ever saw it, and he said it turned brown again as the season came round. May the—may the saints have my sowl, if I believe a word of it."

"*I* have one, your reverence; and it is a rarity, I allow. Stoats turn white often in hard winters, but polecats rarely. If your reverence and your honour will excuse me a moment, I will fetch it. It was shot by my Lord Welter when he was staying here last winter. A fine shot is my lord, your reverence, for so young a man."

He left the room, and the priest and Charles were left alone together.

"Does he believe all this rubbish about witches?" said Father Tiernay.

"As firmly as you do the liquefaction of the blood of—"

"There, there; we don't want all that. Do you believe in it?"

"Of course I don't," said Charles; "but why should I tell him so?"

"Why do you lend yourself to such a humbug?"

"Why do you?"

"Begorra, I don't know. I am always lending. I lent a low-browed, hang-jawed spalpeen of a Belgian

priest two pound the other day, and sorra a halfpenny of it will me mother's son ever see again. Hark!"

There were voices approaching the lodge—the voices of two uneducated persons quarrelling; one that of a man, and the other of a woman. They both made so much out in a moment. Charles recognised the voices, and would have distracted the priest's attention, and given those without warning that there were strangers within; but, in his anxiety to catch what was said, he was not ready enough, and they both heard this.

The man's voice said fiercely, "You did."

The woman's voice said, after a wild sob, "I did not."

"You did. I saw you. You are a liar as well as—"

"I swear I didn't. Strike me dead, Bill, if there's been anything wrong."

"No. If I thought there had, I'd cut his throat first and yours after."

"If it had been *him*, Bill, you wouldn't have used me like this."

"Never you mind that."

"You want to drive me mad. You do. You hate me. Master Charles hates me. Oh, I wish I was mad."

"I'd sooner see you chained by the waist in the straw, than see what I saw to-night." Then followed an oath.

The door was rudely opened, and there entered first of all our old friend, Charles's groom, William, who seemed beside himself with passion, and after him a figure which struck the good Irishman dumb with amazement

and admiration—a girl as beautiful as the summer morning, with her bright brown hair tangled over her forehead, and an expression of wild terror and wrath on her face, such as one may conceive the old sculptor wished to express, when he tried, and failed, to carve the face of the Gorgon.

She glared on them both in her magnificent beauty only one moment. Yet that look, as of a lost soul out of another world, mad, hopeless, defiant, has never past from the memory of either of them.

She was gone, in an instant, into an inner room, and William was standing looking savagely at the priest. In another moment his eyes had wandered to Charles, and then his face grew smooth and quiet, and he said—

"We've been quarrelling, sir; don't you and this good gentleman say anything about it. Master Charles, dear, she drives me mad sometimes. Things are not going right with her."

Charles and the priest walked thoughtfully home together.

"Allow me to say, Ravenshoe," said the priest, "that, as an Irishman, I consider myself a judge of remarkable establishments. I must say honestly that I have seldom or never met with a great house with so many queer elements about it as yours. You are all remarkable people. And, on my honour, I think that our friend Mackworth is the most remarkable man of the lot."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BLACK HARE.

It was a glorious breezy November morning; the sturdy oaks alone held on to the last brown remnants of their summer finery; all the rest of the trees in the vast sheets of wood which clothed the lower parts of the downs overhanging Ravenshoe, had changed the bright colours of autumn for the duller, but not less beautiful, browns and purples of winter. Below, in the park, the deer were feeding among the yellow fern brakes, and the rabbits were basking and hopping in the narrow patches of slanting sun-light, which streamed through the leafless trees. Aloft, on the hill, the valiant blackcock led out his wives and family from the whortle-grown rocks, to flaunt his plumage in the warmest corner beneath the Tor.

And the Tors, too, how they hung aloft above the brown heather, which was relieved here and there by patches of dead, brown, king-fern; hung aloft like brilliant, clearly defined crystals, with such mighty breadths of light and shadow as Sir Charles Barry never could accomplish, though he had Westminster Abbey to look at every day.

Up past a narrow sheep path, where the short grass faded on the one side into feathery broom, and on the other into brown heather and grey stone, under the shadow of the Tor which lay nearest to Ravenshoe, and overhung those dark woods in which we saw Densil just now walking with his old hound; there was grouped, on the morning after the day of Charles's arrival, a happy party, every one of whom is already known to the reader. Of which circumstance I, the writer, am most especially glad. For I am already as tired of introducing new people to you as my lord chamberlain must be of presenting strangers to Her Majesty at a levée.

Densil first, on a grey cob, looking very old and feeble, straining his eyes up the glen whither Charles, and James, the old keeper, had gone with the greyhounds. At his rein stood William, whom we knew at Oxford. Beside the old man sat Mary on her pony, looking so radiant and happy, that, even if there had been no glorious autumn sun overhead, one glance at her face would have made the dullest landscape in Lancashire look bright. Last, not least, the good Father Tiernay, who sat on his horse, hatless, radiant, scratching his tonsure.

"And so you're determined to back the blue dog, Miss Mary," said he.

"I have already betted a pair of gloves with Charles, Mr. Tiernay," said Mary, "and I will be rash enough to do so with you. Ruin is the quickest striker we have ever bred."

"I know it; they all say so," said the priest; "but come, I must have a bet on the course. I will back Lightning."

"Lightning is the quicker dog," said Densil; "but Ruin! you will see him lie behind the other dog all the run, and strike the hare at last. Father Mackworth, a good judge of a dog, always backs him against the kennel."

"Where is Father Mackworth?"

"I don't know," said Densil. "I am surprised he is not with us; he is very fond of coursing."

"His reverence, sir," said William, "started up the moor about an hour ago. I saw him going."

"Where was he going to?"

"I can't say, sir. He took just over past the rocks on the opposite side of the bottom from Mr. Charles."

"I wonder," said Father Tiernay, "whether James will find his friend, the witch, this morning."

"Ah," said Densil, "he was telling me about that. I am sure I hope not."

Father Tiernay was going to langh, but didn't.

"Do you believe in witches, then, Mr. Ravenshoe?"

"Why, no," said Densil, stroking his chin thoughtfully, "I suppose not. It don't seem to me now, as an old man, a more absurd belief than this new electro-biology and table-turning. Charles tells me that they use magic crystals at Oxford, and even claim to have raised the devil himself in Merton; which, at this time of day, seems rather like reverting to first principles.

But I am not sure I believe in any of it. I only know that, if any poor old woman has sold herself to Satan, and taken it into her head to transform herself into a black hare, my greyhounds won't light upon her. She must have made such a deuced hard bargain that I shouldn't like to cheat her out of any of the small space left her between this and, and—thingamy."

William, as a privileged servant, took the liberty of remarking that old Mrs. Jewel didn't seem to have been anything like a match for Satan in the way of a bargain, for she had had hard times of it seven years before she died. From which—

Father Tiernay deduced the moral lesson, that that sort of thing didn't pay; and—

Mary said she didn't believe a word of such rubbish, for old Mrs. Jewel was as nice an old body as ever was seen, and had worked hard for her living, until her strength failed, and her son went down in one of the herring-boats.

Densil said that his little bird was too positive. There was the witch of Endor, for instance—

Father Tiernay, who had been straining his eyes and attention at the movements of Charles and the greyhounds, and had only caught the last word, said with remarkable emphasis and distinctness—

> "A broomstick of the Witch of Endor,
> Well shod wi' brass,"

and then looked at Densil as though he had helped him

from William, and, spurring his pony down the sheep-path at the risk of his neck, made for the entrance of the wood. The hare, one of such dark colour that she looked almost black, scudded along in a parallel direction, and dashed into the grass ride just in front of Densil; they saw her flying down it, just under the dogs' noses, and then they saw her dash into a cross ride, one of the dogs making a strike at her as she did so; then hare and greyhounds disappeared round the corner.

"She's dead, sir, confound her! we shall have her now, the witch!"

They all came round the corner pell-mell. Here stood the dogs, panting and looking foolishly about them, while, in front of them, a few yards distant, stood Father Mackworth, looking disturbed and flushed, as though he had been running.

Old James stared aghast; William gave a long whistle; Mary, for a moment, was actually terrified. Densil looked puzzled, Charles amused; while Father Tiernay made the forest ring with peal after peal of uproarious laughter.

"I am afraid I have spoilt sport, Mr. Ravenshoe," said Mackworth, coming forward; "the hare ran almost against my legs, and doubled into the copse, puzzling the dogs. They seemed almost inclined to revenge themselves on me for a moment."

"Ha, ha!" cried the jolly priest, not noticing, as Charles did, how confused the priest was. "So we've

caught you sneaking home from your appointment with your dear friend."

"What do you mean, sir, by appointment? You are overstepping the bounds of decorum, sir. Mr. Ravenshoe, I beg you to forgive me for inadvertently spoiling your sport."

"Not at all, my dear Father," said Densil, thinking it best, from the scared look of old James, to enter into no urther explanations; "we have killed one hare, and now I think it is time to come home to lunch."

"Don't eat it all before I come; I must run up to the Tor; I have dropped my whip there," said Charles. "James, ride my horse home; you look tired. I shall be there on foot in half the time."

He had cast the reins to James, and was gone, and they all turned homewards together.

Charles, fleet of foot, was up on the Tor in a few minutes, and had picked up his missing property; then he sat him down on a stone, thinking.

"There is something confoundedly wrong somewhere, and I should like to find out what it is. What had that Jack priest been up to, that made him look so queer? And, also, what was the matter between Ellen and William last night? Whom has she been going on with? I will go down. I wish I could find some trace of him. One thing I know, and one thing only, that he hates me worse than poison; and that his is not likely to be a passive hatred."

The wood into which Charles descended was of very

large extent, and composed of the densest copse, intersected by long straight grass rides. The day had turned dark and chilly; and a low moaning wind began to sweep through the bare boughs, rendering still more dismal the prospect of the long-drawn vistas of damp grass and rotting leaves.

He passed musing on from one ride to another, and, in one of them, came in sight of a low, white building, partly ruinous, which had been built in the deepest recesses of the wood for a summer-house. Years ago Cuthbert and Charles used to come and play there on happy summer holidays — play at being Robinson Crusoe and what not; but there had been a fight with the poachers there, and one of their young men had been kicked in the head by one of the gang, and rendered idiotic; and Charles had seen the blood on the grass next morning; and so they voted it a dismal place, and never went near it again. Since then it had been taken possession of by the pheasants to dust themselves in. Altogether it was a solitary, ghostly sort of place; and, therefore, Charles was considerably startled, on looking in at the low door, to see a female figure, sitting unmoveable in the darkest corner.

It was not a ghost for it spoke. It said, "Are you come back to upbraid me again? I know my power, and you shall never have it." And Charles said "Ellen!"

She looked up, and began to cry. At first a low, moaning cry, and afterwards a wild passionate burst of grief.

He drew her towards him, and tried to quiet her, but she drew away. "Not to-day," she cried, "not to-day."

"What is the matter, pretty one? What is the matter, sister?" said Charles.

"Call me sister again," she said, looking up. "I like that name. Kiss me, and call me sister, just for once."

"Sister dear," said Charles kindly, kissing her on the forehead, "What is the matter?"

"I have had a disagreement with Father Mackworth, and he has called me names. He found me here walking with Master Cuthbert."

"With Cuthbert?"

"Ay, why not? I might walk with you or him any time, and no harm. I must go."

Before Charles had time to say one word of kindness, or consolation, or wonder, she had drawn him towards her, given him a kiss, and was gone down the ride towards the house. He saw her dress flutter round the last corner, and she disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

LORD SALTIRE'S VISIT, AND SOME OF HIS OPINIONS.

THERE followed on the events above narrated two or three quiet months—a time well remembered by Charles, as one of the quietest and most peaceful in his life, in all the times which followed. Every fine day there was a ramble with his father through the kennels and stables, and down through the wood, or over the farm. Charles, who at Oxford thought no day complete, after riding with the drag, or Drakes, or rowing to Sandford; without banquier, vingt-et-un, or loo, till three o'clock in the morning, now found, greatly to his astonishment, that he got more pleasure by leaning over a gate with his father, and looking at fat beasts and pigs, chewing a straw the while. A noisy wine party, where he met the same men he had met the night before, who sang the same songs, and told the same silly stories, was well enough; but he began to find that supper in the oak dining-room, sitting between Mary and his father, and talking of the merest trifles, was a great deal pleasanter. Another noticeable fact was, that Father Mackworth's sarcasms were turned off with a good-natured laugh, and that battle was on all occasions refused to the worthy priest. In short, Charles, away from company and

dissipation, was himself. The good, worthy fellow, whom I learnt to like years ago. The man whose history I am proud to write.

Lord Saltire had arrived meanwhile; he had written to Densil, to say that he was horribly bored; that he wished, as an ethical study, to settle, once for all, the amount of boredom a man could stand without dying under it; that, having looked carefully about him, to select a spot and a society where that object could be obtained, he had selected Ravenshoe, as being the most eligible; that he should wish his room to have a south aspect; and that his man would arrive with his things three days after date. To this Densil had written an appropriate reply, begging his kind old friend to come and make his house his home; and Lord Saltire had arrived one evening, when every one was out of the way but Mary, who received him in the hall.

She was in some little trepidation. She had read and heard enough of "the wild prince and Poyns," and of Lord Saltire's powers of sarcasm, to be thoroughly frightened at her awful position. She had pictured to herself a terrible old man, with overhanging eyebrows, and cruel gleaming eyes beneath them. Therefore she was astonished to see a gentleman, old it is true, but upright as a young oak, of such remarkable personal beauty, and such a pleasant expression of countenance as she had never seen before.

She was astonished, I said; but, mind you, Mary was too much of a lady to show too much of it. She sailed

towards him through the gloom of the old hall with a frank smile, and just that amount of admiration in her sweet eyes which paid Lord Saltire the truest compliment he had had for many a day.

"Mr. Ravenshoe will be sorry to have missed receiving you, my lord," she said.

"If Mr. Ravenshoe is sorry," he said, "I certainly am not. Mr. Ravenshoe has done me the honour to show me the most beautiful thing in his house first. I rather think that is a pretty compliment, Miss Corby, unless I am getting out of practice."

"That is a very pretty compliment, indeed," she answered, laughing. "I most heartily thank you for it. I know nothing in life so pleasant as being flattered. May I introduce Father Mackworth?"

Lord Saltire would be delighted. Father Mackworth came forward, and Mary saw them look at one another. She saw at a glance that either they had met before, or there was some secret which both of them knew. She never forgot Mackworth's defiant look, or Lord Saltire's calm considerate glance, which said as plain as words, "This fellow knows it."

This fellow knew it—had known it for years. The footman who had left Mackworth at the lodge of the French Lycée, the nameless domestic, who formed the last link with his former life—this man had worn Lord Saltire's livery, and he remembered it.

"I see," said Lord Saltire, "that Miss Corby is prepared for walking. I guess that she is going to meet

Mr. Ravenshoe, and, if my surmise is correct, I beg to be allowed to accompany her."

"You are wonderfully correct, my lord. Cuthbert and Charles are shooting pheasants in the wood, and Mr. Ravenshoe is with them on his pony. If you will walk with me, we shall meet them."

So the grand old eagle and the pretty sweet-voiced Robin passed out on to the terrace, and stood looking together, under the dull December sky, at the whispering surges. Right and left the misty headlands seemed to float on the quiet grey sea, which broke in sighs at their feet, as the long majestic groundswell rolled in from the ocean; and these two stood there for a minute or more without speaking.

"The new school of men," said Lord Saltire at last, looking out to sea, "have perhaps done wisely, in thinking more of scenery and the mere externals of nature than we did. We lived the life of clubs and crowds, and we are going to our places one after another. There are but few left now. These Stephensons and Paxtons are fine men enough. *They* are fighting inert matter, but *we* fought the armies of the Philistine. We had no time for botany and that sort of thing; which was unfortunate. You young folks shouldn't laugh at us though."

"I laugh at you!" she said suddenly and rapidly; "laugh at the giants who warred with the gods. My lord, the men of our time have not shown themselves equal to their fathers."

Lord Saltire laughed.

"No, not yet," she continued; "when the time comes they will. The time has not come yet."

"Not yet, Miss Corby. It will come,—mind the words of a very old man; an old fellow who has seen a confounded deal of the world."

"Are we to have any more wars, Lord Saltire?"

"Wars such as we never dreamt of, young lady."

"Is all this new inauguration of peace to go for nothing?"

"Only as the inauguration of a new series of wars, more terrible than those which have gone before."

"France and England combined can give the law to Europe."

Lord Saltire turned upon her and laughed. "And so you actually believe that France and England can actually combine for anything more important than a raid against Russia. Not that they will ever fight Russia you know. There will be no fight. If they threaten loud enough, Russia will yield. Nicholas knows his weakness, and will give way. If he is fool enough to fight the Western powers, it will end in another *duel à l'outrance* between France and England. They will never work together for long. If they do, Europe is enslaved, and England lost."

"But why, Lord Saltire?"

"Well, well; I think so. Allow me to say that I was not prepared to find a deep-thinking, though misguided politician in such an innocent-looking young lady. God defend the dear old land, for every fresh acre

I see of it confirms my belief that it is the first country in the world."

They were crossing the old terraced garden towards the wood, where they heard the guns going rapidly, and both were silent for a minute or so. The leafless wood was before them, and the village at their feet. The church spire rose aloft among the trees. Some fisherman patriarch had gone to his well-earned rest that day, and the bell was tolling for him. Mary looked at the quiet village, at the calm winter's sea, and then up at the calm stern face of the man who walked beside her, and said—

"Tell me one thing, Lord Saltire; you have travelled in many countries. Is there any land, east or west, that can give us what this dear old England does—settled order, in which each man knows his place and his duties? It is so easy to be good in England."

"Well, no. It is the first country in the world. A few bad harvests would make a hell of it, though. Has Ravenshoe got many pheasants down here?"

And, so talking, this strange pair wandered on towards the wood, side by side.

Charles was not without news in his retirement, for a few friends kept him pretty well *au fait* with what was going on in the world. First, there was news from Oxford; one sort of which was communicated by Charles Marston, and another sort by one Marker of Brazenose, otherwise known as "Bodger," though why, I know not, nor ever could get any one to tell me. He was purveyor

of fashionable intelligence, while Charles Marston dealt more in example and advice. About this time the latter wrote as follows :—

"How goes Issachar? Is the ass stronger or weaker than formerly? Has my dearly-beloved ass profited, or otherwise, by his stay at Ranford? How is the other ass, my Lord Welter? He is undoubtedly a fool, but I think an honest one, so long as you keep temptation out of his way. He is shamefully in debt; but I suppose, if their horse wins the Derby, he will pay; otherwise I would sooner be my lord than his tradesmen. How goes the 'grand passion,'—has Chloe relented? She is a great fool if she does. Why, if she refuses you, she may marry Lord Welter, and he may settle his debts on her. A word in your ear. I have an invitation to Ranford. I must go, I suppose. The dear old woman, whose absurdities your honour is pleased to laugh at, has been always kind to me and mine; and I shall go. I shall pay my just tribute of flattery to the noble honest old soul, who is struggling to save a falling house. Don't you laugh at lady Ascot, you impudent young rascal. I have no doubt that she offers some prominent points for the exercise of your excellency's wit, but she is unmeasurably superior to you, you young scapegrace.

"Bless your dear old face; how I long to see it again! I am coming to see it. I shall come to you at the beginning of the Christmas vacation. I shall come to you a beaten man, Charley. I shall only get a

second. Never mind; I would sooner come to you and yours and hide my shame, than to any one else.

"Charles, old friend, if I get a third, I shall break my heart. Don't show this letter to any one. I have lost the trick of Greek prose. Oh, old Charley! believe this, that the day once lost can never, never come back any more! They preach a future hell; but what hell could be worse than the eternal contemplation of opportunities thrown away—of turning-points in the affairs of a man's life, when, instead of rising, he has fallen—not by a bold stroke, like Satan, but by laziness and neglect?"

Charles was very sorry, very grieved, and vexed, to find his shrewd old friend brought to this pass by over-reading, and over-anxiety about a subject, which, to a non-university man, does not seem of such vital importance. He carried the letter to his father, in spite of the prohibitation contained in it, and he found his father alone with the good, honest Father Tiernay; to whom, not thinking that thereby he was serving his friend ill, he read it aloud.

"Charley dear," said his father, half rising from his chair, "he must come to us, my boy; he must come here to us, and stay with us till he forgets his disappointment. He is a noble lad. He has been a good friend to my boy; and, by George, the house is his own."

"I don't think, dad," said Charles, looking from Densil to Father Tiernay, "that he is at all justified in

the dark view he is taking of matters. The clever fellows used to say that he was safe of his first. You know he is going in for mathematics as well."

"He is a good young man, any way," said Father Tiernay; "his sentiments do honour to him; and none the worst of them is his admiration for my heretic young friend here, which does him most honour of all. Mr. Ravenshoe, I'll take three to one against his double first; pity he 'aint a Catholic. What the divvle do ye Prothestants mean by absorbing (to use no worse language) the rints and revenues left by Catholic testators for the good of the hooly Church, for the edication of heretics? Tell me that, now."

The other letter from Oxford was of a very different tenor. Mr. Marker, of Brazenose, began by remarking that—

"He didn't know what was come over the place; it was getting confoundedly slow, somehow. They had had another Bloomer ball at Abingdon, but the thing was a dead failure, sir. Jemmy Dane, of University, had driven two of them home in a cart, by way of Nunenham. He had past the Pro's at Magdalen turnpike, and they never thought of stopping him, by George. Their weak intellects were not capable of conceiving such glorious audacity. Both the Proctors were down at Coldharbour turnpike, stopping every man who came from Abingdon way. Toreker, of Exeter, was coming home on George Simmond's Darius, and, seeing the Proctors in the light of the turnpike-gate, had put his

horse at the fence (Charles would remember it, a stubbed hedge and a ditch), had got over the back water by the White House, and so home by the Castle. Above forty men had been rusticated over this business, and some good fellows too." (Here followed a list of names, which I could produce, if necessary; but seeing that some names on the list are now rising at the bar or in the Church, think it better not.) "Pembroke had won the fours, very much in consequence of Exeter having gone round the flag, and, on being made to row again, of fouling them in the gut. The water was out heavily, and had spoilt the boating. The Christchurch grind had been slow, but the best that year. L—n was going down, and they said was going to take the Pychley. C—n was pretty safe of his first—so reading men said. Martin of Trinity had got his testamur, at which event astonishment, not unmixed with awe, had fallen on the University generally. That he himself was in for his *vivâ voce* two days after date, and he wished himself out of the hands of his enemies."

There was a postscript, which interested Charles as much as all the rest of the letter put together. It ran thus :—

"By-the-bye, Welter has muckered; you know that by this time. But, worse than that, they say that Charles Marston's classical first is fishy. The old cock has over-worked himself, they say."

Lord Saltire never went to bed without having Charles up into his drawing-room for a chat. "Not having," as

his lordship most truly said, "any wig to take off, or any false teeth to come out, I cannot see why I should deny myself the pleasure of my young friend's company at night. Every evening, young gentleman, we are one day older, and one day wiser. I myself have got so confoundedly wise with my many years that I have nothing left to learn. But it amuses me to hear your exceedingly naive remarks on things in general, and it also flatters and soothes me to contrast my own consummate wisdom with your folly. Therefore, I will trouble you to come up to my dressing-room every night, and give me your crude reflections on the events of the day."

So Charles came up one night, with Mr. Marker's letter, which he read to Lord Saltire, while his valet was brushing his hair; and then Charles, by way of an easily answered question, asked Lord Saltire, What did he think of his friend's chances?

"I must really remark," said Lord Saltire, "even if I use unparliamentary language, which I should be very sorry to do; that that is one of the silliest questions I ever had put to me. When I held certain seals, I used to have some very foolish questions put to me (which, by the way, I never answered), but I don't know that I ever had such a foolish question put to me as that. Why, how on earth can I have any idea of what your friend's chances are? Do be reasonable."

"Dear Lord Saltire, don't be angry with me. Tell me, as far as your experience can, how far a man who

knows his work, by George, as well as a man can know it, is likely to fail through nervousness. You have seen the same thing in Parliament. You know how much mischief nervousness may do. Now, do give me your opinion."

"Well, you are putting your question in a slightly more reasonable form; but it is a very silly one yet. I have seen a long sort of man, with black hair and a hook nose, like long Montague, for instance, who has been devilishly nervous till he got on his legs, and then has astonished every one, and no one more than myself, not so much by his power of declamation, as by the extraordinary logical tenacity with which he clung to his subject. Yes, I don't know but what I have heard more telling and logical speeches from unprepared men than I ever have from one of the law lords. But I am a bad man to ask. I never was in the lower house. About your friend's chance;—well, I would not give two-pence for it; in after life he may succeed. But, from what you have told me, I should prepare myself for a disappointment."

Very shortly after this, good Lord Saltire had to retire for a time in the upper chambers; he had a severe attack of gout.

There had been no more quarrelling between Father Mackworth and Charles; Peace was proclaimed,—an armed truce; and Charles was watching, watching in silence. Never since he met her in the wood had he had an opportunity of speaking to Ellen. She always

avoided him. William, being asked confidentially by Charles what he thought was the matter, said that Ellen had been "carrin on" with some one, and he had been blowing her up; which was all the explanation he offered. In the mean time, Charles lived under the comforting assurance that there was mischief brewing, and that Mackworth was at the bottom of it.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARLES'S "LIDDELL AND SCOTT."

A GROWING anxiety began to take possession of Charles shortly before Christmas, arising from the state of his father's health. Densil was failing. His memory was getting defective, and his sense dulled. His eye always was searching for Charles, and he was uneasy at his absence. So it was with a vague sense of impending misfortune that he got a letter from the dean of his college, summoning him back after the Christmas vacation.

Mr. Dean said, "That Mr. Ravenshoe's case had been re-considered, and that, at the warm, and, he thought, misguided, intercession of the Bursar, a determination had been come to, to allow Mr. Ravenshoe to come into residence again for the Lent term. He trusted that this would be a warning, and that, while there was time, he would arrest himself in that miserable career of vice and folly which could only have one termination—utter ruin in this world, and in the next."

A college "Don" by long practice, acquires a power of hurting a young man's feelings, utterly beyond competition, save by a police magistrate. Charles winced

under this letter; but the same day Mary, coming singing down stairs as was her wont, was alarmed by the descent of a large opaque body of considerable weight down the well of the staircase, which lodged in the wood basket at the bottom, and which, on examining, she found to be a Liddell and Scott's Lexicon. At which she rejoiced; for she concluded that Charles had taken to reading again, though why he should begin by throwing his books down stairs she could not well understand, until he joined her and explained that he had been dusting it on the landing, and that it had slipped out of his hand.

"What a crack it came down," added he; "I wish Father Mackworth's head had been underneath it."

"I have no doubt of it, young gentleman," said the priest quietly from behind; and there he was with his hand on the library door, and in he went and shut it behind him.

Mary and Charles were both awfully disconcerted. Mary felt horribly guilty; in fact, if the priest had remained quiet one moment more, he would undoubtedly have heard one or two candid, and far from complimentary remarks about himself from that young lady, which would have made his ears tingle.

"Confound him," said Charles; "how he glides about! He learned that trick, and a few others, at that precious Jesuit College of his. They teach them that sort of thing as the old Jews teach the young pickpockets. The old father inquisitor puts the door ajar

with a bell against it, and they all have to come in one after another. The one who rings it gets dropped on to like blazes."

Mary was going to ask what exact amount of personal suffering being dropped on to like blazes involved; but Charles stopped her, and took her hand.

"Mary dear," he said, "do you ever think of the future?"

"Night and day, Charles,—night and day."

"If he dies, Mary? When he dies?"

"Night and day, brother," she answered, taking one of his great brown hands between her two white little palms. "I dream in my sleep of the new regime which is to come, and I see only trouble, and again trouble."

"And then?"

"There is a God in heaven, Charles."

"Ay, but, Mary, what will you do?"

"I?" and she laughed the merriest little laugh ever you heard. "Little me? Why, go for a governess to be sure. Charles, they shall love me so that this life shall be a paradise. I will go into a family where there are two beautiful girls; and, when I am old and withered, there shall be two nurseries in which I shall be often welcome, where the children shall come babbling to my knee, the darlings, and shall tell me how they love me, almost as well as their mother. There is my future. Would you change it?"

Charles was leaning against the oak banister; and, when he saw her there before him, when he saw that valiant true-hearted face, in the light which streamed from the old window above, he was rebuked, and bent down his head on the rail. The Dean's letter of that morning had done something; but the sight of that brave little woman, so fearless with all the world before her, did more. She weak, friendless, moneyless, and so courageous! He with the strong arm, so cowardly! It taught him a lesson indeed, a lesson he never forgot. But oh! for that terrible word—too late!

Ah! too late! What word is so terrible as that? You will see what I mean soon. That is the cry which one writer puts in the mouths of the lost spirits in hell. God's mercy is infinite, and it is yet a question whether it were better for Charles to have fallen into the groove of ordinary life, or to have gone through those humiliating scenes through which we must follow him.

"Charley dear," said Mary, laying her hand on his shoulder, "it is not about myself I am thinking; it is about you. What are you going to do when he is gone? are you going into the Church?"

"Oh, no!" said Charles, "I couldn't bear the idea of that."

"Then, why are you at Oxford?"

"To get an education, I suppose."

"But what use will a university education be to you, Charles? Have you no plans?"

"I give you my word, my dear Mary, that I am as much in the dark about the future as a five days old puppy."

"Has he made any provision for you?"

"Oh, yes! I am to have six thousand."

"Do you know that the estate is involved, Charles?"

"No."

"I believe it is. There has been a great deal of state kept up here, and I believe it is the case."

"Cuthbert would soon bring that round."

"I tremble to think of the future, Charles. Are your debts at Oxford heavy?"

"Pretty well. Five hundred would clear me."

"Don't get any more in debt, that's a dear."

"No, Mary dear, I won't. I don't care for the future. I shall have 180*l.* a year. That will be enough for William and me. Then I shall go to the bar and make a deuce of a lot of money, and marry Adelaide. Then you will come to live with us, and we shall have such jolly times of it.—Take that, you villain!"

This last elegant apostrophe was addressed to William (who at that moment had come in by the side door), and was accompanied by the dexterous delivery of the Liddell and Scott, in the manner of a cricket ball. Our friend William stood to catch it in a style worthy of Box, with his knees a yard apart, and one palm over the other; but, as luck would have it, he missed it, and it alighted full on the shins of Father Mackworth, who

had selected that time for coming out of the library; and so it lay sillily open at λαμ, λεμ, at his feet.

Mackworth really thought that it was intentional, and was furious. He went back into the library; and Charles, seeing what must come, followed him, while Mary fled upstairs. There was no one in the room but Cuthbert and Father Tiernay.

"I will be protected from insult in this house," began Mackworth; "twice to-day I have been insulted by Mr. Charles Ravenshoe, and I demand protection."

"What have you been doing, Charley?" said Cuthbert. "I thought you two had given up quarrelling. You will wear my life out. Sometimes, what with one thing and another, I wish I were dead. Oh! if the great problem were solved! Surely my brother may avoid brawling with a priest, a man sacred by his office, though of another faith. Surely my brother has taste enough to see the propriety of that."

"Your brother has no taste or sense, sir," said Father Mackworth. "He has no decency. He has no gentlemanly feeling. Within ten minutes he has dropped a book downstairs, and lamented, to my face, that it hadn't fallen on my head; and just now he has thrown the same book at me, and hit me with it."

"I thank God, Charles," said poor weary Cuthbert, "that our father is spared this. It would kill him. Brother, brother, why do you vex me like this? I have always stood on your side, Charley. Don't let me be killed with these ceaseless brawls."

"They will soon cease, sir," said Father Mackworth; "I leave this house to-morrow."

"Cuthbert, hear me now. I never intended to insult him."

"Why did you throw your book at him, Charley? It is not decorous. You must know when you wound him you wound me. And I have fought such battles for you, Charley."

"Cuthbert! brother! do hear me. And let him hear me. And let Father Tiernay hear me. Cuthbert, you know I love you. Father Tiernay, you are a good and honest man; hear what I have to say. You Mackworth, you are a scoundrel. You are a double-dyed villain. What were you doing with that girl in the wood, the day you hunted the black hare a month ago? Cuthbert, tell me, like an honest gentleman, did you ever walk in the wood with Ellen?"

"I?" said Cuthbert, scared; "I never walked with Ellen there. I have walked with Mary there, brother. Why should I not?"

"There, look at the lie that this man has put into her mouth. She told me that he had found you and her walking together there."

"I am not answerable for any young woman's lies," said Father Mackworth. "I decline to continue this discussion. It is humiliating. As for you, you poor little moth," he said, turning to Charles, "when the time comes, I will crush you with my thumb against the wall. My liking for your father prevents my doing my duty as yet. In that I err. Wait."

Charles had been in a passion before this; but, seeing danger, and real danger abroad, he got cool, and said—

"Wait."

And they both waited, and we shall see who waited the longest.

"I have done it now, Mary dear," said Charles, returning upstairs with the unlucky lexicon. "It is all over now."

"Has there been a scene?"

"A terrible scene. I swore at him, and called him a villain."

"Why did you do that, Charles? Why are you so violent? You are not yourself, Charles, when you give way to your temper like that."

"Well, I'll tell you, my Robin. He is a villain."

"I don't think so, Charles. I believe he is a high-minded man."

"I know he is not, birdie. At least, I believe he is not."

"I believe him to be so, Charles."

"I know him to be otherwise; at least, I think so."

"Are you doing him justice, Charley dear? Are you sure you are doing him justice?"

"I think so."

"Why?"

"I cannot tell you, Mary. When the end of all things comes, and you and I are thrown abroad like two corks on the great sea, you will know. But I cannot tell you."

"I believe, dear, that you are so honest that you

would not do injustice even to him. But, oh! be sure that you are right. Hush! Change the subject. What were you going to read when that unlucky book fell downstairs?"

"Demosthenes."

"Let me come in and sit with you, Charley dear, and look out the words; you don't know how clever I am. Is it the "De Coronâ"?

Charles took her hand and kissed it; and so they two poor fools went on with their Demosthenes.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARSTON'S ARRIVAL.

THE night after the terrible lexicon quarrel, which, you will observe, arose entirely from Charles's good resolution to set to work reading—whereby we should take warning not to be too sanguine of good resolutions, taken late, bringing forth good fruit—the very evening I say after this fracas, Charles, his father, and Mary, were sitting in the library together. Of course Densil had heard nothing of the disturbance, and was, good old gentleman, as happy as you please; all his elements of pleasure were there. Father Mackworth was absent. Father Tiernay was throwing his whole hearty soul into a splendid copy of Bewick's birds, date 1799. Cuthbert was before the upper fireplace, beyond the pillar, poring over goodness only knows what monkish lore; while close to him was bird Mary sewing, and Charles reading aloud a book, very often quoted in everyday life, unconsciously.

Charles read how Mr. Quilp begged Mr. Brass would take particular care of himself, or he would never forgive him; how there was a dog in the lane who had killed a boy on Tuesday, and bitten a man on Friday; how the

dog lived on the right hand side, but generally lurked on the left, ready for a spring: and they were laughing over Mr. Brass's horror, when there came a noise of wheels on the gravel.

"That is Marston, father, for a thousand pounds," said Charles.

He hurried into the hall, as the men were undoing the door; Mary, dropping her work, went after him; and Densil, taking his stick, came too. Cuthbert looked up from the further end of the room, and then bent his head over his book again. Father Tiernay looked up, inquisitive and interested, but sat still. They who followed into the hall saw this.

Charles stood in front of the hall door, and out of the winter's darkness came a man, with whom, as Mary once playfully said, she had fallen in love at once. It was Marston.

Charles went up to him quickly with both hands out, and said—

"We are so glad."

"It is very kind of you. God bless you; how did you know it?"

"We know nothing, my dear Marston, except that you are welcome. Now put me out of my pain."

"Why, well," said the other, "I don't know how it has happened; but I have got my double first."

Charles gave a wild cheer, and the others were all on him directly—Densil, Tiernay, Cuthbert, and all. Never was such a welcome; not one of them, save Charles, had

ever seen him before, yet they welcomed him as an old friend.

"You have not been to Ranford then?" said Charles.

"Why, no. I did not feel inclined for it after so much work. I must take it on my way back."

Lord Saltire's gout was better to-night, and he was down stairs. He proceeded to remark that, having been in ——; well, he wouldn't shock Miss Corby by saying where—for a day or so, he had suddenly, through no merit of his own, got promoted back into purgatory. That, having fought against the blue devils, and come down stairs, for the sole purpose of making himself disagreeable, he had been rewarded, for that display of personal energy and self-sacrifice, by most unexpectedly meeting a son of his old friend, Jackdaw Marston. He begged to welcome his old friend's son, and to say that, by Jove, he was proud of him. His young friend's father had not been a brilliant scholar, as his young friend was; but had been one of the first whist-players in England. His young friend had turned his attention to scholastic honours, in preference to whist, which might or might not be a mistake: though he believed he was committing no breach of trust in saying that the position had been thrust on his young friend from pecuniary motives. Property had an infernal trick of deteriorating. His own property had not happened to deteriorate (none knew why, for he had given it every chance); but the property of his young friend's father having

deteriorated in a confounded rapid sort of way, he must say that it was exceedingly creditable in his young friend to have made such a decided step towards bringing matters right again as he had."

"My father's son, my Lord, thanks you for your kind remembrance of his father. I have always desired to see and meet my father's old friends, of whom you, Mr. Ravenshoe, were among the kindest. We have given up the greater vices lately, my Lord, but we do our best among the smaller ones."

There was a quiet supper, at which Lord Saltire consented to stay, provided no one used the expression "cheese;" in which case he said he should have to retire. There wasn't cheese on the table, but there was more than cheese; there was scolloped cockles, and Lord Saltire ate some. He said at the time that they would have the same effect on him as swallowing the fireshovel. But, to relieve your mind at once, I may tell you that they didn't do him any harm at all, and he was as well as ever next morning.

Father Tiernay said grace; and, when the meal was half over, in came Father Mackworth. Densil said, "Father Mackworth, Mr. Marston;" and Marston said, after a moment's glance at him, "How do you do, sir?"

Possibly a more courteous form of speaking to a new acquaintance might have been used. But Marston had his opinions about Father Mackworth, and had no objection that the holy father should know them.

"We got, Mary, said Cuthbert suddenly, "more cocks than pheasants to-day. Charles killed five couple, and I four. I was very vexed at being beaten by Charles, because I am so much the better shot."

Charles looked up and met his eyes—a look he never forgot. Accompanying the apparent petulance of the remark was a look of love and pity and sorrow. It pleased him, above everything, during the events which were to come, to recall that look, and say, "Well, he liked me once."

That evening Charles and Marston retired to Charles's study (a deal of study had been carried on there, you may depend), and had a long talk over future prospects. Charles began by telling him all about Madam Adelaide, and Marston said, "Oh, indeed! what are you going to do, Charley, boy, to keep her? She comes out of an extravagant house, you know."

"I must get called to the bar."

"Hard work for nothing, for many years, you know."

"I know. But I won't go into the Church; and what else is there?"

"Nothing I know of, except billiard marking and steeple-chase riding."

"Then, you approve of it?"

"I do, most heartily. The work will be good for you. You have worked before, and can do it again. Remember how well you got on at Shrewsbury."

Then Charles told him about the relations between

himself and Father Mackworth, and what had happened that day.

"You and he have had disgraceful scenes like this before, haven't you?"

"Yes, but never so bad as this.

"He is a very passionate man, isn't he? You took utterly wrong grounds for what you did to-day. Don't you see that you have no earthly grounds for what you said, except your own suspicions? The girl's own account of the matter seems natural enough. That she was walking with your most saint-like brother, and the priest found them, and sent them to the right-about with fleas in their ears."

"I believe that man to be a great villain," said Charles.

"So may I," said the other, "but I shan't tell him so till I can prove it. As for that quarrel between William and his sister the night you came home, that proves nothing, except that she has been going too far with some one. But who? What have you been doing that empowers him to say that he will crush you like a moth?"

"Oh, bravado, I take it! You should have seen how mad he looked when he said it."

"I am glad I did not. Let us talk no more about him. Is that sweet little bird Mary Corby?"

"You know it is."

"Well, so I do know, but I wanted an excuse for saying the name over again. Charles, you are a fool."

"That is such a very novel discovery of yours," said

Charles, laughing. What have I been a-doing on now?"

"Why didn't you fall in love with Mary Corby instead of Madam Adelaide?"

"I am sure I don't know. Why, I never thought of such a thing as that."

"Then you ought to have done so. Now go to bed."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH THERE IS ANOTHER SHIPWRECK.

TIME jogged on very pleasantly to the party assembled at Ravenshoe that Christmas. There were woodcocks and pheasants in the woods; there were hares, snipes, and rabbits on the moor. In the sea there were fish; and many a long excursion they had in the herring-boats —sometimes standing boldly out to sea towards the distant blue island in the main, sometimes crawling lazily along under the lofty shoreless cliffs which towered above their heads from 200 to 1,100 feet high.

It was three days before Christmas-day, and they were returning from fishing along the coast, and were about ten miles or so from home. I say returning, though in fact there was not a breath of wind, and the boat was drifting idly along on the tide. Two handsome simple-looking young men were lolling by the useless tiller; an old man, hale and strong as a lion, with a courteous highbred look about him, was splicing a rope; and a tall, pale, black-haired man was looking steadily seaward, with his hands in his pockets, while Charles and Marston were standing in the bows smoking.

"What a curious, dreamy, dosy, delicious kind of winter you have down here," said Marston.

"I am very fond of it," said Charles; "it keeps you in continual hope for the spring that is coming. In the middle of frost and snow and ice one is apt to lose one's faith in waving boughs and shady pools."

"I have had such a quiet time with you down here, Charley. I am so pleased with the way in which you are going on. You are quite an altered man. I think we shall both look back to the last few quiet weeks as a happy time."

"Here the tall dark man, who was looking out to sea, suddenly said—

"Rain and hail, snow and tempest, stormy wind fulfilling His word."

"Ay, ay," said the old man; "going to blow to-night, I expect."

"We shall go home pretty fast, may be."

"Not us, Master Charles dear," said the tall man. "We are going to have it from south and by west, and so through west round to north. Before which time there'll be souls in glory, praise be to God."

The old man took off his hat reverently.

"There won't be amuch surf on when we beaches she," said one of the young men. "It won't get up afore the wind be full round west for an hour."

"You're a spaking like a printed buke, Jan," said the old man.

"I'm a thinking differently, Master Evans," said the dark man. "It will chop round very sudden, and be west before we know where we are. I speak with

humility to a man who has seen the Lord's wonders in the deep so many years longer nor me. But I think, under God, I am right."

"You most in general be right. They as converses with the Lord night and day, day and night, like as you do, knows likely more of his works nor we, as ain't your gifts."

"The Lord has vouchsafed me nothing in the way of a vision, about this afternoon, Master Evans."

"Didn't 'ee dream never at all last night?" said one of the young men, "Think 'ee now."

"Nought to bear on wind or weather, Jan. I judges from the glass. It's a dropping fast."

Jan would have had more faith in one of Matthew's dreams, and didn't seem to think much of the barometer. Meanwhile Marston had whispered Charles—

"Who is Matthews? What sect is he?"

"Oh, he's a Brianite."

"What is that?"

"A sort of Ranter, I believe."

Marston looked up, and saw the two great black eyes under the lofty forehead fixed full upon him. With the instinct of a gentleman, he said at once—

"I was asking Mr. Charles what sect you were of; that was all. He tells me you are a Brianite, and I had never heard of that sect before. I hope you will let me talk to you about your matters of belief some day."

Matthews took off his hat, and said—That with the Lord's will he would speak to his honour. "Will your

honour bear with a poor fisherman, ignorant of the world's learning, but who has had matters revealed to him by the Lord in dreams and visions of the night. Peter was only a fisherman, your honour, and, oh, if we could only hear him speak now!"

He paused, and looked again to seaward. Charles had gone again into the bow, and Marston was standing among the men right aft. Suddenly Matthews turned again upon him, and said—

"In the beaching of this here boat to-night, your honour, there may be danger. In such case my place will be alongside of him," pointing to Charles. "There'd be a many kind hearts aching, if aught happened to him. You stick close to these young men. They'll see after you, sir."

"You keep close alongside of we, sir. You hold on of we, sir. We'll see you all right, sir," said the two young men.

"But, my dear good souls, I am as good a swimmer as any in England, and as active as a cat. Pray, don't mind me."

"You keep hold of we and run, sir," said one of the young men, "that's all you're a'got to do, sir."

"I shall most certainly run," said Marston laughing, but I decline drowning any one but myself—"

Charles said at this moment, "Do come here, and look at this."

It was worth looking at, indeed. They were about a mile from shore, floating about anyhow on an oily

smooth sea; for the tide had changed, and they were making no headway. Before them one of the noblest headlands on the coast, an abrupt cone of slate, nigh a thousand feet high, covered almost entirely with grass, sloped suddenly into the water; and in advance of it, but slightly on one side, a rugged mound of black rock, nearly six hundred feet, stood out into the sea, and contrasted its horrid jagged lines with the smooth green of the peak behind. Round its base, dividing it from the glossy sea, ran a delicate line of silver—the surf caused by the ground swell; and in front the whole promontory was dimly mirrored in the quietly heaving ocean.

"What a noble headland," said Marston; "is that grass on the further peak too steep to walk upon?"

"There's some one a'walking on it now," said old Evans. "There's a woman a'walking on it."

None could see it but he, except Matthews, who said he couldn't tell if it was a sheep or no.

Charles got out his glass, and the old man was right. A woman was walking rapidly along the peak, about the third of the way down.

"What a curious place for a woman to be in!" he remarked. "It is almost terrible to look at."

"I never saw any one there before, save the shepherd," said the old man.

"It's a sheep-path," said one of the young ones. "I have been along there myself. It is the short way round to Coombe."

Charles would have thought more of the solitary

female figure on that awful precipice, but that their attention was diverted by something else. From the south-westward black flaws of wind began to creep towards them, alternated with long irregular bands of oily calm. Soon the calm bands disappeared, and the wind reached them. Then they had steerage, and in a very short time were roaring out to sea close hauled, with a brisk and ever increasing breeze.

They saw that they would have to fetch a very long leg, and make a great offing, in order to reach Ravenshoe at all. The wind was freshening every moment, changing to the west, and the sea was getting up. It took them three hours to open Ravenshoe bay; and, being about five miles from the shore, they could see that already there was an ugly side-surf sweeping in, and that the people were busy on the beach, hauling up their boats out of harm's way.

"How beautifully these craft sail," said Marston, as they were all hanging on by her weather gunwale, and the green sea was rushing past to leeward, almost under their feet, in sheets of angry foam.

"It is amazing what speed is got out of them on a wind," said Charles, "but they are dangerous craft."

"Why so?"

"These lug-sails are so awkward in tacking, you will see."

They ran considerably past Ravenshoe and about six miles to sea, when the word was given to go about. In an instant the half-deck was lumbered with the heavy

red sails; and, after five minutes of unutterable confusion, she got about. Marston was expecting her to broach to every moment during this long five minutes, but fortune favoured them. They went freer on this tack, for the wind was now north of west, and the brave little craft went nearly before it at her finest pace. The men kept on her as much sail as she could stand, but that was very little; fast as they went, the great seas went faster, as though determined to be at the dreadful rendezvous before the boat. Still the waves rose higher and the wind howled louder. They were nearing the shore rapidly.

Now they began to see, through the mist, the people gathered in a crowd on the shore, densest at one point, but with a few restless stragglers right and left of that point, who kept coming and going. This spot was where they expected to come ashore. They were apparently the last boat out, and all the village was watching them with the deepest anxiety.

They began to hear a sound other than the howling of the wind in the rigging, and the rush of waters around them—a continuous thunder, growing louder each moment as the boat swept onward. The thunder of the surf upon the sand. And, looking forward, they could see just the top of it as it leapt madly up.

It was a nervous moment. They stood ready in their shirts and trousers, for a rush, should it be necessary. And the old man was at the helm. They saw the seas begin to curl. Then they were in the middle of them.

Then the water left them on the sand, and three brave fellows from the shore dashed to hook on the tackles; but they were too late. Back with a roar like a hungry lion came the sea; the poor boat broached to, and took the whole force of the deluge on her broadside. In a moment more, blinded and stunned, they were all in the water, trying to stand against the backward rush which took them near midthigh. Old Master Evans was nearest to Marston; he was tottering to fall when Marston got hold of him, and saved him. The two young men got hold of both of them. Then three men from the shore dashed in and got hold of Charles; and then, as the water went down and they dared move their feet, they all ran for their lives. Marston and his party got on to dry land on their feet, but Charles and his assistants were tumbled over and over, and washed up ignominiously covered with sand. Charles, however, soon recovered himself, and, looking round to thank those who had done him this service, found that one of them was William, who, when the gale had come on, had, with that bland indifference to the stud-groom's personal feelings which we have seen him exhibit before, left his work, and dressed in a Jersey and blue trousers, and come down to lend a hand. He had come in time to help his foster-brother out of the surf.

"I am so very thankful to you," said Charles to the two others. "I will never forget you. I should have been drowned but for you. William, when I am in trouble I am sure to find you at my elbow."

"You won't find me far off, Master Charles," said William. They 'didn't say any more to one another those two. There was no need.

The tall man Matthews had been cast up with a broken head, and, on the whole, seemed rather disappointed at not finding himself in paradise. He had stumbled in leaping out of the boat, and hurt his foot, and had had a hard time of it, poor fellow.

As Charles and William stood watching the poor boat breaking up, and the men venturing their lives to get the nets out of her, a hand was laid on Charles's shoulder, and, turning round, he faced Cuthbert.

"Oh, Charles, Charles, I thought I had lost you. Come home and let us dry you, and take care of you. William, you have risked your life for one who is very dear to us. God reward you for it! Brother, you are shivering with cold, and you have nothing but your trousers and Jersey on, and your head and feet are bare, and your poor hair is wet and full of sand; let me carry you up, Charles, the stones will cut your feet. Let me carry you, Charles. I used to do it when you were little."

There was water in Charles's eyes (the salt water out of his hair, you understand), as he answered:

"I think I can walk, Cuthbert; my feet are as hard as iron."

"No, but I must carry you," said Cuthbert. "Get up, brother."

Charles prepared to comply, and Cuthbert suddenly pulled off his shoes and stockings, and made ready.

"Oh, Cuthbert, don't do that," said Charles, "You break my heart."

"Do let me, dear Charles. I seldom ask you a favour. If I didn't know that it was acceptable to God, do you think I would do it?"

Charles hesitated one moment; but he caught William's eye, and William's eye and William's face said so plainly "do it," that Charles hesitated no longer, but got on his brother's back. Cuthbert ordered William, who was bare-foot, to put on his discarded shoes and stockings, which William did; and then Cuthbert went toiling up the stony path towards the hall with his brother on his back—glorying in his penance.

Is this ridiculous? I cannot say I can see it in this light. I may laugh to scorn the religion which teaches men that, by artificially producing misery and nervous terror, and in that state flying to religion as a comfort and refuge, we in any way glorify God, or benefit ourselves. I can laugh, I say, at a form of religion like this; but I cannot laugh at the men who believe in it, and act up to it. No. I may smoke my pipe, and say that the fool Cuthbert Ravenshoe took off his shoes, and gave them to the groom, and carried a twelve-stone brother for a quarter of a mile barefoot, and what a fool he must be, and so forth. But the sneer is a failure, and the laugh dies away; and I say, "Well, Cuthbert,

if you are a fool, you are a consistent and manly one at all events."

Let us leave these three toiling up the steep rocky path, and take a glance elsewhere. When the gale had come on, little Mary had left Densil, and, putting on her bonnet, gone down to the beach. She had asked the elder fishermen whether there would be any danger in beaching the boat, and they had said in chorus, "Oh, bless her sweet ladyship's heart, no. The young men would have the tackles on her and have her up, oh, ever so quick;" and so she had been reassured, and walked up and down. But, as the wind came stronger and stronger, and she had seen the last boat taken in half full of water—and as the women kept walking up and down uneasily, with their hands under their aprons—and as she saw many an old eagle eye, shaded by a horny hand, gazing anxiously seaward, at the two brown sails plunging about in the offing—she had lost heart again, and had sat her down on a windlass apart, with a pale face, and a sick heart.

A tall gaunt brown woman came up to her and said,

"My lady musn't fret. My lady would never do for a fisherman's wife. Why, my dear tender flesh, there's a hundred strong arms on the beach now, as would fetch a Ravenshoe out of anywhere a'most. 'Tis a cross surf, Miss Mary; but, Lord love ye, they'll have the tackles on her afore she's in it. Don't ye fret, dear, don't ye fret."

But she had set apart and fretted nevertheless; and,

when she saw the brown bows rushing madly through the yellow surf, she had shut her eyes and prayed, and had opened them to see the boat on her beam ends, and a dozen struggling figures in the pitiless water.

Then she had stood up and wrung her hands.

They were safe. She heard that, and she buried her face in her hands, and murmured a prayer of thanksgiving.

Some one stood beside her. It was Marston, bareheaded and barefooted.

"Oh, thank God," she said.

"We have given you a sad fright."

"I have been terribly frightened. But you must not stand dripping there. Please, come up, and let me attend you."

So she got him a pair of shoes, and they went up together. The penance procession had passed on before; and a curious circumstance is this, that, although on ordinary occasions Marston was as lively a talker as need be, on this occasion he was an uncommonly stupid one, as he never said one word all the way up to the hall, and then separated from her with a formal little salutation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARSTON'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

MARY did not wonder at Marston's silence. She imagined that perhaps he had been sobered by being cast on shore so unceremoniously, and thought but little more of it. Then she dressed for dinner, and went and stood in one of the deep windows of the hall, looking out.

The great fire which leapt and blazed in the hall chimney was fast superseding the waning daylight outside. It was very pleasant to look at the fire, and the firelight on wall and ceiling, on antler and armour, and then to get behind the curtain and look out into the howling winter's evening, over the darkening raging sea, and the tossing trees, and think how all the boats were safe in, and the men sitting round the pleasant fires with their wives and children, and that the dogs were warm in the kennels, and the horses in the stable; and to pity the poor birds, and hope they had good warm nooks and corners to get to; and then to think of the ships coming up the channel, and hope they might keep a good offing.

This brought her to thinking, for the first time, of her own little self—how, so many years ago, she had been cast up like a little piece of sea-weed out of that awful

ocean. She thought of the *Warren Hastings*, and how she and Charles, on summer-days, when out gathering shells on the rocks, used to look over to where the ship lay beneath the sea, and wonder whereabout it was. Then she had a kindly smile on her face as she thought of Mr. Archer, the brave and good (now I am happy to say Captain Archer), and looked over the hall to a hideous and diabolical graven image, which he had sent the year before, among some very valuable presents, and had begged her to be particularly careful of, as he had risked his life in getting it; and which she and Charles had triumphantly placed in the hall, and maintained there, too, in spite of the sarcasms of Father Mackworth, and the pious horror of the servants and villagers. And so she went on thinking—thinking of her dead parents, of the silence maintained by her relations, of old Densil's protection, and then of the future. That protection must cease soon, and then—

A governess! There were many stories about governesses not being well treated. Perhaps it was their own fault, or they were exceptional cases. She would like the nursery best, and to keep away from the drawing-room altogether! "Yes," she said, "I will *make* them love me; I will be so gentle, patient, and obliging. I am not afraid of the children—I know I can win *them*—or of my mistress much; I believe I can win *her*. I am most afraid of the superior servants; but, surely, kindness and submission will win them in time.

"My sheet-anchor is old Lady Ascot. She got very fond of me during that six months I staid with her; and she is very kind. Surely she will get me a place where I shall be well treated; and, if not, why then—I shall only be in the position of thousands of other girls. I must fight through it. There is another life after this.

"It will be terribly hard parting from all the old friends though! After that, I think I shall have no heart left to suffer with. Yes; I suppose the last details of the break-up will be harder to bear than anything which will follow. That will tear one's heart terribly. That over, I suppose my salary will keep me in drawing materials, and give me the power, at every moment of leisure, of taking myself into fairyland.

"I suppose actual destitution is impossible. I should think so. Yes, yes; Lady Ascot would take care of that. If that were to come though? They say a girl can always make fourpence a day by her needle. How I would fight, and strive, and toil! And then how sweet death would be!"

She paused, and looked out on the darkened ocean. "And yet," she thought again, "I would follow—follow him to the world's end:—

> "'Across the hills, and far away,
> Beyond their utmost purple rim;
> Beyond the night, across the day,
> The happy princess followed him.'"

A door opened into the hall, and a man's step was on

the stone-floor: she raised the curtain to see who it was. It was Marston; and he came straight towards her, and stood beside her, looking out over the wild stormy landscape.

"Miss Corby," he said, "I was coming to try and find you."

"You were very lucky in your search," she said, smiling on him. "I was alone here with the storm; and, if I had not raised the curtain, you would never have seen me. How it blows! I am glad you are not out in this. This is one of your lucky days."

"I should be glad to think so. Will you listen to me for a very few minutes, while I tell you something?"

"Surely," she said. "Who is there that I would sooner listen to?"

"I fear I shall tire your patience now, though. I am a comparatively poor man."

"And what of that, my dear Mr. Marston? You are rich in honour, in future prospects. You have a noble future before you."

"Will you share it, Mary?"

"Oh! what do you mean?"

"Will you be my wife? I love you beyond all the riches and honours of the world—I love you as you will never be loved again. It is due to you and to myself to say that, although I call myself poor, I have enough to keep you like a lady, and all my future prospects beside. Don't give me a hasty answer, but tell me is it possible you can become my wife?"

"Oh, I am so sorry for this!" said poor Mary. "I never dreamt of this. Oh, no! it is utterly and entirely impossible, Mr. Marston—utterly and hopelessly impossible! You must forgive me, if you can; but you must never, never think about me more."

"Is there no hope?" said Marston.

"No hope, no hope!" said Mary. "Please never think about me any more, till you have forgiven me; and then, with your children on your knee, think of me as a friend who loves you dearly."

"I shall think of you till I die. I was afraid of this: it is just as I thought."

"What did you think?"

"Nothing—nothing! Will you let me kiss your hand?"

"Surely; and God bless you!"

"Are we to say good-bye for ever, then?" said poor Marston.

"I hope not. I should be sorry to think that," said poor Mary, crying. "But you must never speak to me like this again, dear Mr. Marston. God bless you, once more!"

Charles was dressing while this scene was going on, and was thinking, while brushing his hair, what there was for dinner, and whether there would be a turbot or not, and whether the cook would send in the breast of the venison. The doe, Charles sagely reflected, had been killed five days before, and the weather had been warm: surely That Woman would let them have

the breast. He was a fool not to have told her of it in the morning before he went out; but she was such an obstinate old catamaran that she very likely wouldn't have done it. "There was no greater mistake," this young Heliogabalus proceeded to remark, than "hanging your breasts too long. Now, your haunch, on the other hand—" but we cannot follow him into such a vast and important field of speculation. "There would be a couple of cocks, though—pretty high, near about the mark——"

The door opened, and in walked Father Mackworth.

"Hallo, Father!" said Charles, "how are you? Did you hear of our spill to-day? We were deuced near done for, I assure you."

"Charles," said the priest, "your nature is frank and noble. I was in terror to-day lest you should go to your account bearing me malice."

"A Ravenshoe never bears malice, Father," said Charles.

"A Ravenshoe never does, I am aware," said Father Mackworth, with such a dead equality of emphasis, that Charles could not have sworn that he laid any on the word "Ravenshoe."

"But I have got an apology to make to you, Father," said Charles: "I have to apologize to you for losing my temper with you the other day, and breaking out into I can't say what tirade of unjust anger. I pray you to forgive me. We don't love one another, you know. How can we? But I behaved like a black-

guard, as I always do when I am in a passion. Will you forgive me?"

"I had forgotten the circumstance." ("Good heaven!" said Charles to himself, "can't this man help lying?") "But, if I have anything to forgive, I freely do so. I have come to ask for a peace. As long as your father lives, let there be outward peace between us, if no more."

"I swear there shall," said Charles. "I like you to-night, sir, better than ever I did before, for the kindness and consideration you show to my father. When he is gone there will be peace between us, for I shall leave this house and trouble you no more."

"I suppose you will," said Father Mackworth, with the same deadness of emphasis remarked before. And so he departed.

"That is a manly young fellow, and a gentleman," thought Father Mackworth. "Obstinate and headstrong, without much brains; but with more brains than the other, and more education. The other will be very troublesome and headstrong; but I suppose I shall be able to manage him."

What person do you think Father Mackworth meant by the "other?" He didn't mean Cuthbert.

At dinner Densil was garrulous, and eager to hear of their shipwreck. He had made a great rally the last fortnight, and was his old self again. Lord Saltire, whose gout had fled before careful living and moderate exercise, informed them, after the soup, that he intended

to leave them after four days' time, as he had business in another part of the country. They were rather surprised at his abrupt departure, and he said that he was very sorry to leave such pleasant society, in which he had been happier than he had been for many years.

"There is a pleasant, innocent, domestic sort of atmosphere which radiates from you, my old friend," he said, "such as I seldom or never get, away from you or Mainwaring, grim warrior though he be (you remember him at Ranford, Charles?) But the law of the Medes and Persians is not amenable to change, and I go on Thursday."

The post arrived during dinner, and there was a letter for Charles. It was from Ranford. "Welter comes on Thursday, father—the very day Lord Saltire goes. How annoying!"

"I must try to bear up under the affliction!" said that nobleman, taking snuff, and speaking very drily.

"Where is he to go, I wonder?" mused Mary, aloud. "He must go into the west wing, for he always smokes in his bed-room."

Charles expected that Cuthbert would have had a sneer at Welter, whom he cordially disliked; but Cuthbert had given up sneering lately. "Not much more reading for you, Charles!" he said.

"I am afraid not," said Charles. "I almost wish he wasn't coming; we were very happy before."

Charles was surprised to see Marston so silent at dinner. He feared he might have offended him, but

couldn't tell how. Then he wondered to see Mary so silent too, for she generally chirruped away like a lark; but he didn't refer the two similar phenomena to a common cause, and so he arrived at no conclusion.

When Lord Saltire went to bed that night, he dismissed Charles from attendance, and took Marston's arm; and, when they were alone together, he thus began:—

"Does your shrewdness connect my abrupt departure with the arrival of Lord Welter?"

"I was inclined to, my lord; but I did not see how you were to have known of it."

"I heard yesterday from Lady Ascot."

"I am sorry he is coming," said Marston.

"So am I. I can't stay in the house with him. The contrast of his loud coarse voice and stable slang to the sort of quiet conversation we have had lately would be intolerable; besides, he is an atrocious young ruffian, and will ruin our boy if he can."

"Charles won't let him, now, Lord Saltire."

"Charles is young and foolish. I am glad, however, that Welter does not go back to Oxford with him. But there will be Welter's set in their glory, I suppose, unless some of them have got hung. I would sooner see him at home. He is naturally quiet and domestic. I suppose he was in a sad set up there."

"He was in a very good set, and a very bad one. He was a favourite everywhere."

"He had made some acquaintances he ought to be

proud of, at least," said Lord Saltire, in a way which made honest Marston blush. "I wish he wasn't going to Ranford."

"Report says," said Marston, "that affairs are getting somewhat shaky there: Welter's tradesmen can't get any money."

"Lord Saltire shook his head significantly, and then said: "Now I want to speak to you about yourself. Did not you have a disappointment to-day!"

"Yes, my lord."

"Ha!"

They both sat silent for a moment.

"How did you guess that, Lord Saltire?"

"I saw what was going on; and, by your manner and hers to-day, I guessed something had taken place. Is there no hope for you?"

"None."

"I feared not; but what right had I to tell you so?"

"Perhaps, my lord, I should not have believed you if you had," said Marston, smiling.

"What man would have? You are not angry?"

"How could I be? The world is out of joint, that is all."

"You are a true gentleman. I swear to you," said the old man, eagerly, "that there is no one in fault. She has given her honest little heart away—and what wonder!—but, believe me, that you are behaving as a man should behave, in not resenting it. If you were a heathen and a Frenchman (synonymous terms, my

dear boy), you might find it your duty to cut somebody's throat; but, being a Christian and a gentleman, you will remain a true friend to somebody who loves you dearly, and is worth loving in return. This sort of thing cuts a man up confoundedly. It happened to me once; but, believe me, you will get over it."

"I mean to do so. How kind and generous you are to me! how shall I ever repay you?"

"By kindness to those I love," said the old man. "I take this opportunity of telling you that your fortunes are my particular care. I cannot get you the wife you love, but I am rich and powerful, and can do much. Not another word. Go to bed, sir—to bed."

Marston, sitting on his bed-side that night, said aloud to himself, "And so that is that dicing old *roué*, Saltire, is it? Well, well; it is a funny world. What a noble fellow he would have been if he had had a better chance. Nay, what a noble fellow he is. I am ten years older since this morning" (he wasn't, but he thought it). And so he said his prayers like an honest man, and prayed for the kind old heathen who had such a warm heart; and then, being nowise ashamed to do so, he prayed that he might sleep well; and, for a time, he forgot all about his disappointment, and slept like a child.

Lord Saltire's valet was a staid and sober-minded gentleman of sixty-four. Generally, when he was putting his lordship to bed, he used to give him the news of the day; but to-night Lord Saltire said, "Never mind

the news, Simpson, if you please; I am thinking of something." My lord used to wear a sort of muffler, like a footless stocking, to keep his old knees warm in bed. He remained silent till he got one on, and then, without taking the other from the expectant Simpson, he addressed the fire-irons aloud.

"This is a pretty clumsy contrivance to call a world!" he said, with profound scorn. "Look here (to the poker), here's as fine a lad as ever you saw, goes and falls in love with a charming girl, who cares no more for him than the deuce. He proposes to her, and is refused. Why? because she has given her heart away to another fine young fellow, who don't care twopence for her, and has given *his* heart away to the most ambitious young Jezebel in the three kingdoms, who I don't believe cares so very much for him. I am utterly disgusted with the whole system of mundane affairs! Simpson, give me that muffler, if you please; and pray don't wake me before nine. I must try to sleep off the recollection of some of this folly."

CHAPTER XIX.

ELLEN'S FLIGHT.

AFTER all the fatigues and adventures of the day before, Charles slept well—long pleasant dreams of roaming in sunny places on summer days fell to his happy lot—and so he was not pleased when he found himself shaken by the shoulder.

It was William come to wake him. Charles was at once alarmed to see him there, and started up, saying—

"Is anything the matter, Will? is my father ill?"

"The master's well, I trust, Master Charles. I want to tell you something that I want others to find out for themselves."

"What is it?" said Charles, seriously alarmed, for he had had his suspicions lately, though he had dreaded to give them a name.

"Ellen is gone!"

"My dear lad," said Charles hurriedly, "what makes you think so? Since when have you missed her?"

"Since yesterday afternoon."

"Have you been in her room?"

"Yes. She has not been to bed, and the window is open just as it was yesterday morning at bed-making time."

"Hush—wait! There may be time yet. Go down and saddle two horses at once. I will tell you what I know as we ride, but there is not time now. Tell me only one thing, Is there any one she would be likely to go to at Coombe?"

"No one that I know of."

William departed to get the horses. Charles had suddenly thought of the solitary female figure he had seen passing along the dizzy sheep-path the day before, and he determined to follow that till he lost sight of it.

"For the poor dear girl's sake—for the honour of the old house—I wonder who is at the bottom of all this? I must tell Marston," he said, when he was out on the landing. "George, tell them to get me some coffee instantly. I am going out hunting."

Marston thought as Charles did. The right thing to do would be to follow her, see that she wanted for nothing, and leave her brother with her for a time. "He won't quarrel with her now, you'll see. He is a good fellow, mind you, Charles, though he did lose his temper with her that night."

So they rode forth side by side into the wild winter's morning. The rain had ceased for a time, but the low dark clouds were hurrying swiftly before the blast, and eddying among the loftier tors and summits. The wind was behind them, and their way was east, across the lofty downs.

"William," said Charles at last, "who is at the bottom of this?"

"I don't know, Master Charles. If I did there would be mischief, unless it was one of two."

"Ay, Will, but it ain't. You don't think it is Cuthbert?"

"No, no! He, forsooth! Father Mackworth knows, I believe, more than we do."

"You do not suspect him?"

"Certainly not. I did, but I don't now. I suspect he knows, as I said, more than we do. He has been speaking harshly to her about it."

They had arrived at the hill round which Charles suspected he had seen her pass the day before. It was impossible to pass round the promontory on horseback in the best of weathers; now doubly so. They would have to pass inland of it. They both pulled up their horses and looked. The steep slope of turf, the top of which, close over head, was hid by flying mists, trended suddenly downwards, and disappeared. Eight hundred feet below was the raging sea.

As they stood there, the same thought came across both of them. It was a dreadful place. They neither spoke at all, but spurred on faster, till the little grey village of Coombe, down at their feet, sheltered from the storm by the lofty hills around, opened to their view; and they pushed on down the steep rocky path.

No. No one had seen her yesterday at such a time. The streets would have been full of the miners coming from work; or, if she had come earlier, there would have been plenty of people to see her. It was a small place,

and no stranger, they said, could ever pass through it unnoticed.

And, though they scoured the country far and wide, and though for months after the fishermen fished among the quiet bays beneath the cliffs in fear, lest they should find there something which should be carried in silent awe up the village, and laid quietly in the old churchyard, beneath the elm: yet Ellen was gone—gone from their ken like a summer cloud. They thought it a pious fraud to tell Densil that she was gone—with some excuse, I forget what, but which satisfied him. In a conclave held over the matter, Cuthbert seemed only surprised and shocked, but evidently knew nothing of the matter. Father Mackworth said that he expected something of the kind for some little time, and William held his peace. The gossips in the village laid their heads together, and shook them. There was but one opinion there.

> "Never again shall she put garland on;
> Instead of it she'll wear sad cypress now,
> And bitter elder broken from the bough."

Nora—poor old Nora—took to her bed. Father Mackworth was with her continually, but she sank and sank. Father Mackworth was called away across the moors, one afternoon, to an outlying Catholic tenant's family; and, during his absence, William was sent to Charles to pray him to come, in God's name, to his mother. Charles ran across at once, but Nora was speechless. She had something to say to Charles; but the great

Sower, which shall sow us all in the ground, and tread us down, had his hand heavy on her, and she could not speak. In the morning, when the gale had broken, and the white seabirds were soaring and skimming between the blue sky and the noble green rolling sea, and the ships were running up channel, and the fishing-boats were putting out gaily from the pier, and all nature was brilliant and beautiful, old Nora lay dead, and her secret with her.

"Master Charles," said William, as they stood on the shore together, "she knew something, and Ellen knows it too, I very much suspect. The time will come, Master Charles, when we shall have to hunt her through the world, and get the secret from her."

"William, I would go many weary journeys to bring poor Ellen back into the ways of peace. The fact of her being your sister would be enough to make me do that."

CHAPTER XX.

RANFORD AGAIN.

CHARLES, though no genius, had a certain amount of common sense, and, indeed, more of that commodity than most people gave him credit for. Therefore he did not pursue the subject with William. Firstly, because he did not think he could get any more out of him (for William had a certain amount of sturdy obstinacy in his composition); and secondly, because he knew William was, in the main, a sensible fellow, and loved the ground he stood on. Charles would never believe that William would serve him falsely; and he was right.

He told Marston of the curious words which William had used, and Marston had said—

"I don't understand it. The devil is abroad. Are you coming into any money at your father's death?"

"I am to have 180*l.* a year."

"I wouldn't give 50*l.* a year for your chance of it. What is this property worth?"

"9,000*l.* a year. The governor has lived very extravagantly. The stable establishment is fit for a duke now; and, then, look at the servants!"

"He is not living up to ten thousand a year now, I should say."

"No; but it is only the other day he gave up the hounds. They cost him two thousand a year; and, while he had them, the house was carried on very extravagantly. The governor has a wonderful talent for muddling away money; and, what is more, I believe he was bit with the railways. You know, I believe, the estate is involved."

"Bathershin. But still, Cuthbert won't marry, and his life is a bad one, and you are a heretic, my poor little innocent."

"And then?"

"Heaven only knows what then. I am sure I don't. At what time does the worthy and intellectual Welter arrive?"

"He will be here about six."

"Two hours more rational existence for one, then. After that a smell as of ten thousand stables and fifty stale copies of *Bell's Life* in one's nose, till his lordship takes his departure. I don't like your cousin, Charles."

"What an astounding piece of news! He says you are a conceited prig, and give yourself airs."

"He never said a wiser or truer thing in his life. I am exactly that; and he is a fifth-class steeplechase rider, with a title."

"How you and he will fight!"

"So I expect. That is, if he has the courage for battle, which I rather doubt. He is terribly afraid of me."

"I think you are hard on poor Welter," said Charles; "I do, indeed. He is a generous, good-hearted fellow."

"Oh! we are all generous, good-hearted fellows," said Marston, "as long as we have plenty of money and good digestions. You are right, though, Charley. He is what you say, as far as I know; but the reason I hate him is this:—You are the dearest friend I have, and I am jealous of him. He is in eternal antagonism to me. I am always trying to lead you right, and he is equally diligent in leading you into wrong."

"Well, he sha'n't lead me into any more, I promise you now. Do be civil to him."

"Of course I will, you gaby. Did you think I was going to show fight in your house?"

When Marston came down to dinner, there was Lord Welter sitting beside old Densil, and kindly amusing him with all sorts of gossip—stable and other.

"How do, Marston?" said he, rising and coming forward.

"How d'ye do, Lord Welter?" said Marston.

"I am very glad to meet you here," said Lord Welter, with a good-humoured smile, "although I am ashamed to look you in the face. Marston, my dear Mr. Ravenshoe, is Charles's good genius, and I am his evil one; I am always getting Charles into mischief, and he is always trying to keep him out of it. Hitherto, however, I have been completely successful, and he has made a dead failure."

Old Densil laughed. "You are doing yourself injustice, Welter," he said. "Is he not doing himself an injustice, Mr. Marston?"

"Not in the least, sir," said Marston. And the two young men shook hands more cordially than they had ever done before.

That evening Lord Welter fulfilled Mary's prophecy, that he would smoke in his bed-room, and not only smoked there himself, but induced Charles to come and do so also. Marston was not in the humour for the style of conversation he knew he should have there, and so he retired to bed, and left the other two to themselves.

"Well, Charles," said Welter. "Oh, by-the-bye, I have got a letter for you from that mysterious madcap, Adelaide. She couldn't send it by post; that would not have been mysterious and underhand enough for her. Catch hold."

Charles caught hold, and read his letter. Welter watched him curiously from under the heavy eyebrows, and, when he had finished, said—

"Come put that away, and talk. That sort of thing is pretty much the same in all cases, I take it. As far as my own experience goes, it is always the same. Scold and whine and whimper; whimper, whine, and scold. How's that old keeper of yours?"

"He has lost his wife."

"Poor fellow! I remember his wife—a handsome Irish woman."

"My nurse?"

"Ay, ay. And the pretty girl, Ellen; how is she?"

"Poor Ellen! She has run away, Welter; gone to the bad, I fear."

Lord Welter sat in just the same position, gazing on the fire. He then said, in a very deliberate voice:—

"The deuce she is! I am very sorry to hear that. I was in hopes of renewing our acquaintance."

The days flew by, and, as you know, there came no news from Ellen. The household had been much saddened by her disappearance and by Nora's death, though not one of the number ever guessed what had passed between Mary and Marston. They were not a very cheerful household; scarce one of them but had some secret trouble. Father Tiernay came back after a week or so; and, if good-natured kindly chatter could have cheered them at all, he would have done it. But there was a settled gloom on the party which nothing could overcome. Even Lord Welter, boisterous as his spirits usually were, seemed often anxious and distraught; and, as for poor Cuthbert, he would, at any time, within the knowledge of man, have acted as a "damper" on the liveliest party. His affection for Charles seemed, for some reason, to increase day by day, but it was sometimes very hard to keep the peace between Welter and him. If there was one man beyond another that Cuthbert hated, it was Lord Welter; and sometimes, after dinner, such a scene as this would take place.

You will, perhaps, have remarked that I have never yet represented Cuthbert as speaking to Mary. The real fact is, that he never did speak to her, or to any

woman, anything beyond the merest common places —a circumstance which made Charles very much doubt the truth of Ellen's statement—that the priest had caught them talking together in the wood. However, Cuthbert was, in his way, fond enough of the bonny little soul (I swear I am in love with her myself, over head and ears); and so, one day, when she came crying in, and told him—as being the first person she met—that her little bantam-cock had been killed by the dorking, Cuthbert comforted her, bottled up his wrath, till his father had gone into the drawing-room with her after dinner, and the others were sitting at their wine. Then he said, suddenly:—

"Welter, did you have any cock-fighting to-day?"

"Oh, yes, by-the-bye, a splendid turn-up. There was a noble little bantam in an inclosed yard challenging a great dorking, and they both seemed so very anxious for sport that I thought it would be a pity to baulk them; so I just let the bantam out. I give you my word, it is my belief that the bantam would have been the best man, but that he was too old. His attack was splendid; but he met the fate of the brave."

"You should not have done that, Welter," said Charles; "that was Mary's favourite bantam."

"I don't allow any cock-fighting at Ravenshoe, Welter," said Cuthbert.

"You don't allow it!" said Lord Welter, scornfully.

"No, by heaven," said Cuthbert, "I don't allow it!"

"Don't you?" said Welter; "you are not master

here, nor ever will be. No Ravenshoe was ever master of his own house yet."

"I am absolute master here," said Cuthbert, with a rising colour. "There is no appeal against me here."

"Only to the priest," said Welter. (I must do him justice to say that neither Mackworth nor Tiernay was in the room, or he would not have said it.)

"You are insolent, Welter, and brutal. It is your nature to be so," said Cuthbert, fiercely.

Marston, who had been watching Welter all this time, saw a flash come from his eyes, and, for one moment, a terrible savage setting of the teeth. "Ha, ha! my friend," thought he, "I thought that stupid face was capable of some such expression as that. I am obliged to you, my friend, for giving me one little glimpse of the devil inside."

"By gad, Cuthbert," said Lord Welter, "if you hadn't been at your own table, you shouldn't have said that, cousin or no cousin, twice."

"Stop now," said Charles; "don't turn the place into a bear-pit. Cuthbert, do be moderate. Welter, you shouldn't have set the cocks fighting. Now don't begin quarrelling again, you two, for heaven's sake!"

And so the peace was made: but Charles was very glad when the time came for the party to break up; and he went away to Ranford with Welter, preparatory to his going back to Oxford.

His father was quite his own old self again, and seemed to have rallied amazingly; so Charles left him

without much anxiety; and there were reasons we know of why his heart should bound when he heard the word Ranford mentioned, and why the raging speed of the Great Western Railway express seemed all too slow for him. Lord Ascot's horses were fast, the mail-phaeton was a good one, and Lord Welter's worst enemies could not accuse him of driving slow; yet the way from Didcot to Ranford seemed so interminably long that he said:—

"By Jove, I wish we had come by a slower train, and gone on to Twyford!"

"Why so?"

"I don't know. I think it is pleasanter driving through Wargrave and Henley."

Lord Welter laughed, and Charles wondered why. There were no visitors at Ranford; and, when they arrived, Welter of course adjourned to the stables, while Charles ran upstairs and knocked at Lady Ascot's door.

He was bidden to come in, by the old lady's voice. Her black and tan terrier, who was now so old that his teeth and voice were alike gone, rose from the hearth, and went through the motion and outward semblance of barking furiously at Charles, though without producing any audible sound. Lady Ascot rose up and welcomed him kindly.

"I am so glad to see your honest face, my dear boy I have been sitting here all alone so long. Ascot is very kind, and comes and sits with me, and I give him

some advice about his horses, which he never takes. But I am very lonely."

"But where is Adelaide, aunt dear?"

"She's gone."

"Gone! My dear aunt, where to?"

"Gone to stay ten days with Lady Hainault."

Here was a blow.

"I know you are very disappointed, my poor boy, and I told Welter so expressly to tell you in my last letter. He is so shockingly careless and forgetful!"

"So Welter knew of it," said Charles to himself. "And that is what made him laugh at my hurry. It is very ungentlemanly behaviour."

But Charles's anger was like a summer cloud. "I think, aunt," he said, "that Welter was having a joke with me; that was all. When will she be back?"

"The end of next week."

"And I shall be gone to Oxford. I shall ride over to Casterton and see her."

"You knew Hainault at Shrewsbury? Yes. Well, you had better do so, child. Yes, certainly."

"What made her go, aunt, I wonder?"

"Lady Hainault was ill, and would have her, and I was forced to let her go."

Oh, Lady Ascot, Lady Ascot, you wicked old fibster! Didn't you hesitate, stammer, and blush, when you said that? I am very much afraid you didn't. Hadn't you had, three days before, a furious *fracas* with Adelaide about something, and hadn't it ended by her declaring

that she would claim the protection of Lady Hainault? Hadn't she ordered out the pony-carriage and driven off with a solitary bandbox, and what I choose to call a crinoline-chest? And hadn't you and Lady Hainault had a brillant passage-of-arms over her ladyship's receiving and abetting the recalcitrant Adelaide?

Lady Ascot was perfectly certain of one thing—that Charles would never hear about this from Adelaide; and so she lied boldly and with confidence. Otherwise, she must have made a dead failure, for few people had practised that great and difficult art so little as her ladyship.

That there had been a furious quarrel between Lady Ascot and Adelaide about this time, I well know from the best authority. It had taken place just as I have described it above. I do not know for certain the cause of it, but can guess; and, as I am honestly going to tell you all I know, you will be able to make as good a guess as I hereafter.

Lady Ascot said furthermore, that she was very uneasy in her mind about Ascot's colt, which she felt certain would not stay over the Derby course. The horse was not so well ribbed up as he should be, and had hardly quarter enough to suit her. Talking of that, her lumbago had set in worse than ever since the frost had come on, and her doctor had had the impudence to tell her that her liver was deranged, whereas, she knew it proceeded from cold in the small of her back. Talking of the frost, she was told that there had been a very

good sheet of ice on the carp-pond, where Charles might have skated, though she did hope he would never go on the ice till it was quite safe—as, if he were to get drowned, it would only add to her vexation, and surely she had had enough of that, with that audacious chit of a girl, Adelaide, who was enough to turn one's hair grey; though for that matter it had been grey many years, as all the world might see.

"Has Adelaide been vexing you, aunt dear?" interrupted Charles.

"No, my dear boy, no," replied the old woman. "She is a little tiresome sometimes, but I dare say it is more my fault than hers."

"You will not be angry with her, aunt dear? You will be long-suffering with her, for my sake?"

"Dear Charles," said the good old woman, weeping, "I will forgive her till seventy times seven. Sometimes, dear, she is high-spirited, and tries my temper. And I am very old, dear, and very cross and cruel to her. It is all my fault, Charles, all my fault."

Afterwards, when Charles knew the truth, he used to bless the memory of this good old woman, recalling this conversation, and knowing on which side the fault lay. At this time, blindly in love as he was with Adelaide, he had sense enough left to do justice.

"Aunt, dear," he said, "you are old, but you are neither cross nor cruel. You are the kindest and most generous of women. You are the only mother I ever had, aunt. I dare say Adelaide is tiresome sometimes;

bear with her for my sake. Tell me some more about the horses. God help us, they are an important subject enough in this house now!"

Lady Ascot said, having dried her tears and kissed Charles, that she had seen this a very long time: that she had warned Ascot solemnly, as it was a mother's duty to do, to be careful of Ramoneur blood, and that Ascot would never listen to her; that no horse of that breed had ever been a staying horse; that she believed, if the truth could be got at, that the Pope of Rome had been, indirectly perhaps, but certainly, the inventor of produce stakes, which had done more to ruin the breed of horses, and consequently the country, than fifty reform bills. Then her ladyship wished to know if Charles had read Lord Mount-E——'s book on the Battle of Armageddon, and, on receiving a negative answer, gave a slight abstract of that most prophetical production, till the gong sounded and Charles went up to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER XXI.

CLOTHO, LACHESIS, AND ATROPOS.

THE road from Ranford to Casterton, which is the name of Lord Hainault's place, runs through about three miles of the most beautiful scenery. Although it may barely come up to Cookham or Cliefden, yet it surpasses the piece from Wargrave to Henley, and beats Pangbourne hollow. Leaving Ranford Park, the road passes through the pretty village of Ranford. And in the street of Ranford, which is a regular street, the principal inn is the White Hart, kept by Mrs. Foley.

Here, in summer, all through the long glorious days, which seem so hard to believe in in winter time, come anglers, and live. Here they order their meals at impossible hours, and drive the landlady mad by not coming home to them. Here, too, they plan mad expeditions with the fishermen, who are now in all their glory, wearing bright-patterned shirts, scornful of half-crowns, and in a general state of obfuscation, in consequence of being plied with strange liquors by their patrons, out of flasks, when they are out fishing. Here, too, come artists, with beards as long as your arm, and pass the day under white umbrellas, in pleasant places by the waterside, painting.

The dark old porch of the inn stands out in the street, but the back of the ouse goes down to the river. At this porch there is generally a group of idlers, or an old man sunning himself, or a man on horseback drinking. On this present occasion there were all three of these things, and also Lord Ascot's head-keeper with a brace of setters.

As Charles rode very slowly towards the group, the keeper and the groom on horseback left off talking. Charles fancied they had been talking about him, and I, who know every thing, also know that they had. When Charles was nearly opposite him, the keeper came forward and said—

"I should like to show you the first trout of the season, sir. Jim, show Mr. Ravenshoe that trout."

A beautiful ten-pounder was immediately laid on the stones.

"He would have looked handsomer in another month, Jackson," said Charles.

"Perhaps he would, sir. My lady generally likes to get one as soon as she can."

At this stage the groom, who had been standing apart, came up, and touching his hat, put into Charles's hand a note.

It was in Adelaide's handwriting. The groom knew it, the keeper knew it, they all knew it, and Charles knew they knew it; but what cared he—all the world might know it. But they knew and had been talking of something else before he came up, which

Charles did not know. If anything is going wrong, all the country side know it before the person principally concerned. And all the country side knew that there had been a great and scandalous quarrel between Adelaide and Lady Ascot—all, except Charles.

He put the note in his pocket without opening it; he gave the groom half-a-crown; he bade good-bye to the keeper; he touched his hat to the loiterers; and then he rode on his way toward Casterton, down the village street. He passed the church among the leafless walnut-trees, beneath the towering elms, now noisy with building rooks; and then, in the broad road under the lofty chalk downs, with the elms on his left, and glimpses of the flashing river between their stems, there he pulled up his horse, and read his love-letter.

"Dear Charles,—

"Ain't you very cross at my having been away when you came? I don't believe you are, for you are never cross. I couldn't help it, Charles, dear. Aunt wanted me to go.

"Aunt is very cross and tiresome. She don't like me as well as she used. You mus'n't believe all she says, you know. It ain't one word of it true. It is only her fancy.

"Do come over and see me. Lord Hainault" (this, I must tell you, reader, is the son, not the husband, of Lady Ascot's most cherished old enemy) "is going to be married, and there will be a great wedding. She is

that long Burton girl, whom you may remember. I have always had a great dislike for her; but she has asked me to be bridesmaid, and, of course, one can't refuse. Lady Emily Montfort is 'with me,' as the lawyers say, and, of course, she will have her mother's pearls in her ugly red hair."—

Charles couldn't agree as to Lady Emily's hair being red. He had thought it the most beautiful hair he had ever seen in his life.—

"*Pour moi*, I shall wear a camelia, if the gardener will give me one. How I wish I had jewels to beat hers! She can't wear the Cleveland diamonds as a bridesmaid; that is a comfort. Come over and see me. I am in agony about what aunt may have said to you.

"ADELAIDE."

The reader may see more in this letter than Charles did. The reader may see a certain amount of selfishness and vanity in it: Charles did not. He took up his reins, and rode on; and, as he rode, said, "By Jove, Cuthbert shall lend me the emeralds!"

He hardly liked asking for them; but he could not bear the idea of Lady Emily shining superior to Adelaide in consequence of her pearls. Had he been a wise man (which I suppose you have, by this time, found out that he is decidedly not. Allow me to recommend this last sentence in a grammatical point of view), he would have seen that, with two such glorious creatures as Adelaide and Lady Emily, no one would have seen whether they

were clothed in purple and fine linen, or in sackcloth and ashes. But Charles was a fool. He was in love, and he was riding out to see his love.

The Scotchman tells us about Spey leaping out a glorious giant from among the everlasting hills; the Irishman tells you of Shannon rambling on past castle, and mountain, gathering new beauty as he goes; the Canadian tells you of the great river which streams over the cliff between Erie and Ontario; and the Australian tells you of Snowy pouring eternally from his great curtain of dolomite, seen forty miles away by the lonely traveller on the dull grey plains; but the Englishman tells you of the Thames, whose valley is the cradle of Freedom, and the possessors of which are the arbiters of the world.

And along the Thames valley rode Charles. At first the road ran along beneath some pleasant sunny heights; but, as it gradually rose, the ground grew more abrupt, and, on the right, a considerable down, with patches of gorse and juniper, hung over the road; while, on the left, the broad valley stretched away to where a distant cloud of grey smoke showed where lay the good old town of Casterton. Now the road entered a dark beech wood beneath lofty banks, where the squirrels, merry fellows, ran across the road and rattled up the trees, and the air was faint with the scent of last year's leaves. Then came a break in the wood to the right, and a vista up a long-drawn valley, which ended in a chalk cliff. Then a break in the wood to the left, and a

glance at the flat meadows, the gleaming river, and the dim grey distance. Then the wood again, denser and darker than ever. Then a sound, at first faint and indistinct, but growing gradually upon the ear until it could be plainly heard above the horse's footfall. Then suddenly the end of the wood, and broad open sunlight. Below, the weirs of Casterton, spouting by a hundred channels, through the bucks and under the mills. Hard by, Casterton town, lying, a tumbled mass of red brick and grey flint, beneath a faint soft haze of smoke, against the vast roll in the land called Marldown. On the right, Casterton Park, a great wooded promontory, so steep that one can barely walk along it, clothed with beech and oak from base to summit, save in one place, where a bold lawn of short grass, five hundred feet high, stoops suddenly down towards the meadows, fringed at the edges with broom and fern, and topped with three tall pines—the landmark for ten miles along the river.

A lodge, the white gate of which is swung open by a pretty maiden; a dark oak wood again, with a long vista, ended by the noble precipitous hill on which the house stands; a more open park, with groups of deer lying about and feeding; another dark wood, the road now rising rapidly; rabbits, and a pot-valiant cock-pheasant standing in the middle of the way, and "cur-rucking," under the impression that Charles is in possession of all his domestic arrangements, and has come to disturb them; then the smooth gravel road, getting

steeper and steeper; then the summit; one glimpse of a glorious panorama; then the front door and footmen.

Charles sent his card in, and would be glad to know if Lady Hainault could see him. While he waited for an answer, his horse rubbed its nose against its knee, and yawned, while the footmen on the steps looked at the rooks. They knew all about it too. (The footmen I mean, not the rooks); though I wouldn't swear against a rook's knowing anything, mind you.

Lady Hainault would see Mr. Ravenshoe—which was lucky, because, if she wouldn't have done so, Charles would have been obliged to ask for Adelaide. So Charles's horse was led to the stable, and Charles was led by the butler through the hall, and shown into a cool and empty library, to purge himself of earthly passions, before he was admitted to The Presence.

Charles sat himself down in the easiest chair he could find, and got hold of "Ruskin's Modern Painters." That is a very nice book: it is printed on thick paper, with large print; the reading is very good, full of the most beautful sentiments ever you heard; and there are also capital plates in it. Charles looked through the pictures: he didn't look at the letter-press, I know—for, if he had, he would have been so deeply enchained with it that he wouldn't have done what he did—get up, and look out of the window. The window looked into the flower-garden. There he saw a young Scotch gardener, looking after his rose-trees. His child, a toddling bit of a thing, four years old (it must have been his first, for he was a very

young man), was holding the slips of matting for him; and glancing up between whiles at the great façade of the house, as though wondering what great people were inside, and whether they were looking at him. This was a pretty sight to a good whole-hearted fellow like Charles; but he got tired of looking at that even, after a time; for he was anxious, and not well at ease. And so, after his watch had told him that he had waited half an hour, he rang the bell.

The butler came, almost directly.

"Did you tell Lady Hainault that I was here?" said Charles.

"My lady was told, sir."

"Tell her again, will you?" said Charles, and yawned.

Charles had time for another look at Ruskin, and another look at the gardener and his boy, before the butler came back and said, "My lady is disengaged, sir."

Charles was dying to see Adelaide, and was getting very impatient; but he was, as you have seen, a very contented sort of fellow: and, as he had fully made up his mind not to leave the house without a good half-hour with her, he could afford to wait. He crossed the hall behind the butler, and then went up the great staircase, and through the picture-gallery. Here he was struck by seeing the original of one of the prints he had seen downstairs, in the book, hanging on the wall among others. He stopped the butler, and asked, "What picture is that?"

"That, sir," said the butler, hesitatingly, "that, sir—that is the great Turner, sir. Yes, sir," he repeated, after a glance at a Francia on the one side, and a Rembrandt on the other, "yes, sir, that *is* the great Turner, sir."

Charles was shown into a boudoir on the south side of the house, where sat Lady Hainault, an old and not singularly agreeable looking woman, who was doing crochet-work, and her companion, a strong-minded and vixenish-looking old maid, who was also doing crochet-work. They looked so very like two of the Fates, weaving woe, that Charles looked round for the third sister, and found her not.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Ravenshoe?" said Lady Hainault. "I hope you haven't been kept waiting?"

"Not at all," said Charles; and if that was not a deliberate lie, I want to know what is.

If there was any one person in the world for whom Charles bore a cherished feeling of dislike, it was this virtuous old lady. Charles loved Lady Ascot dearly, and Lady Hainault was her bitterest enemy. That would have been enough; but she had a horrid trick of sharpening her wit upon young men, and saying things to them in public which gave them a justifiable desire to knock her down and jump on her, as the Irish reapers do to their wives; and she had exercised this talent on Charles once at Ranford, and he hated her as much as he could hate any one, and that was not much. Lord Saltire used to say, that he must give her the credit of being the most infernally disagreeable woman in Europe.

Charles thought, by the twitching of her long fingers over her work, that she was going to be disagreeable now, and he was prepared. But, to Charles's great astonishment, the old lady was singularly gracious.

"And how," she said, "is dear Lady Ascot? I have been coming, and coming, for a long time, but I never have gone so far this winter."

"Lucky for aunt!" thought Charles. Then there was a pause, and a very awkward one.

Charles said, very quietly, "Lady Hainault, may I see Miss Summers?"

"Surely! I wonder where she is. Miss Hicks, ring the bell."

Charles stepped forward and rang; and Miss Hicks, as Clotho, who had half-risen, sat down again, and wove her web grimly.

Atropos appeared, after an interval, looking as beautiful as the dawn. So Charles was looking too intently at her to notice the quick, eager glances that the old women threw at her as she came into the room. His heart leapt up as he went forward to meet her; and he took her hand and pressed it, and would have done so if all the furies in Pandemonium were there to prevent him.

It did not please her ladyship to see this; and so Charles did it once more, and then they sat down together in a window.

"And how am I looking?" said Adelaide, gazing at him full in the face. "Not a single pretty com-

pliment for me after so long? I require compliments; I am used to them. Lady Hainault paid me some this morning."

Lady Hainault, as Lachesis, laughed and woved. Charles thought, "I suppose she and Adelaide have been having a shindy. She and aunt fall out sometimes."

Adelaide and Charles had a good deal of quiet conversation in the window; but what two lovers could talk with Clotho and Lachesis looking on, weaving? I, of course, know perfectly well what they talked of, but it is hardly worth setting down here. I find that lovers' conversations are not always interesting to the general public. After a decent time, Charles rose to go, and Adelaide went out by a side door.

Charles made his adieux to Clotho and Lachesis, and departed at the other end of the room. The door had barely closed on him, when Lady Hainault, eagerly thrusting her face towards Miss Hicks, hissed out—

"Did I give her time enough? Were her eyes red? Does he suspect anything?"

"You gave her time enough, I should say," said Miss Hicks, deliberately. "I didn't see that her eyes were red. But he must certainly suspect that you and she are not on the best of terms, from what she said."

"Do you think he knows that Hainault is at home? Did he ask for Hainault?"

"I don't know," said Miss Hicks.

"She shall not stop in the house. She shall go back

to Lady Ascot. I won't have her in the house," said the old lady, furiously.

"Why did you have her here, Lady Hainault?"

"You know perfectly well, Hicks. You know I only had her to spite old Ascot. But she shall stay here no longer."

"She must stay for the wedding now," said Miss Hicks."

"I suppose she must," said Lady Hainault; "but, after that, she shall pack. If the Burton people only knew what was going on, the match would be broken off."

"I don't believe anything is going on," said Miss Hicks; "at least, not on his side. You are putting yourself in a passion for nothing, and you will be ill after it."

"I am not putting myself in a passion, and I won't be ill, Hicks! And you are impudent to me, as you always are. I tell you that she must be got rid of, and she must marry that young booby, or we are all undone. I say that Hainault is smitten with her."

"I say he is not, Lady Hainault. I say that what there is is all on her side."

"She shall go back to Ranford after the wedding. I was a fool to have such a beautiful vixen in the house at all."

We shall not see much more of Lady Hainault. Her son is about to marry the beautiful Miss Burton, and make her Lady Hainault. We shall see something of her by-and-bye.

The wedding came off the next week. A few days previously Charles rode over to Casterton and saw Adelaide. He had with him a note and jewel-case. The note was from Cuthbert, in which he spoke of her as his future sister, and begged her to accept the loan of "these few poor jewels." She was graciously pleased to do so; and Charles took his leave very soon, for the house was turned out of the windows, and the next day but one "the long Burton girl" became Lady Hainault, and Lady Ascot's friend became Dowager. Lady Emily did not wear pearls at the wedding. She wore her own splendid golden hair, which hung round her lovely face like a glory. None who saw the two could say which was the most beautiful of these two celebrated blondes—Adelaide, the imperial, or Lady Emily, the gentle and the winning.

But, when Lady Ascot heard that Adelaide had appeared at the wedding with the emeralds, she was furious. "She has gone," said that deeply injured lady —"she, a penniless girl, has actually gone, and, without my consent or knowledge, borrowed the Ravenshoe emeralds, and flaunted in them at a wedding. That girl would dance over my grave, Brooks."

"Miss Adelaide," said Brooks, "must have looked very well in them, my lady!" for Brooks was good-natured, and wished to turn away her ladyship's wrath.

Lady Ascot turned upon her and withered her. She only said, "Emeralds upon pink! Heugh!" But Brooks was withered nevertheless.

I cannot give you any idea as to how Lady Ascot said "Heugh!" as I have written it above. We don't know how the Greeks pronounced the amazing interjections in the Greek plays. We can only write them down.

"Perhaps the jewels were not remarked, my lady," said the maid, making a second and worse shot.

"Not remarked, you foolish woman!" said the angry old lady. "Not remark a thousand pounds' worth of emeralds upon a girl who is very well known to be a pensioner of mine. And I daren't speak to her, or we shall have a scene with Charles. I am glad of one thing, though; it shows that Charles is thoroughly in earnest. Now let me get to bed, that's a good soul; and don't be angry with me if I am short tempered, for heaven knows I have enough to try me! Send one of the footmen across to the stable to know if Mahratta has had her nitre. Say that I insist on a categorical answer. Has Lord Ascot come home?"

"Yes, my lady."

"He might have come and given me some news about the horse. But there, poor boy, I can forgive him."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST GLIMPSE OF OXFORD.

OXFORD. The front of Magdalen Hall, about which the least said the soonest mended. On the left, further on, All Souls, which seems to have been built by the same happy hand which built the new courts of St. John's Cambridge, (for they are about equally bad). On the right, the Clarendon and the Schools, blocking out the western sky. Still more to the right, a bit of Exeter, and all Brazenose. In front the Radcliff, the third dome in England, and, beyond, the straight façade of St. Mary's, gathering its lines upward ever, till, tired of window and buttress, of crocket, finial, gargoyle, and all the rest of it, it leaps up aloft in one glorious crystal, and carries up one's heart with it into the heaven above.

Charles Ravenshoe and Marston. They stood side by side on the pavement, and their eyes roamed together over the noble mass of architecture, passing from the straight lines, and abrupt corner of the Radcliff, on to the steeple of St. Mary's. They stood silent for a moment, and then Marston said—

"Serve him right."

"Why?" said Charles.

"Because he had no business to be driving tandem at

all. He can't afford it. And, besides, if he could, why should he defy the authorities by driving tandem? Nobody would drive tandem if it wasn't forbidden."

"Well, he is sent down, and therefore your virtue may spare him."

"Sent down!" said Marston, testily, "he never ought to have come up. He was only sent here to be pitchforked through the schools, and get a family living."

"Well, well," said Charles; "I was very fond of him."

"Pish!" said Marston. Whereat Charles laughed uproariously, and stood in the gutter. His mirth was stopped by his being attacked by a toothless black and tan terrier, who was so old that he could only bark in a whisper, but whose privilege it was to follow about one of the first divinity scholars of the day, round the sunniest spots in the town. The dog having been appeased, Charles and Marston stood aside, and got a kindly smile from the good old man, in recognition of their having touched their caps to him.

"Charley," said Marston, "I am so glad to hear of your going on so well. Mind you, if you had stuck to your work sooner, you would have had more than a second in Moderations. You must, and you shall, get a first, you know. I will have it."

"Never, my boy, never;" said Charles; "I haven't head for it."

"Nonsense. You are a great fool; but you may get your first."

Thereupon Charles laughed again, louder than before, and wanted to know what his friend had been eating to upset his liver. To which Marston answered "Bosh!" and then they went down Oriel Lane, "And so by Merton," as the fox-hunters say, to Christ Church Meadow.

"I am glad you are in the University eight," said Marston; "it will do you a vast deal of good. You used to over-value that sort of thing, but I don't think that you do so now. You can't row or ride yourself into a place in the world, but that is no reason why you should not row or ride. I wish I was heavy enough to row. Who steers to-day?

"The great Panjandrum."

"I don't like the great Panjandrum. I think him slangy. And I don't pardon slang in any one beyond a very young bachelor."

"I am very fond of him," said Charles, "and you are bilious, and out of humour with every one in heaven and earth, except apparently me. But, seriously speaking, old man, I think you have had something to vex you, since you came up yesterday. I hav'n't seen you since you were at Ravenshoe, and you are deucedly altered, do you know?"

"I am sure you are wrong, Charles. I have had nothing—Well, I never lie. I have been disappointed in something, but I have fought against it so, that I am sure you must be wrong. I cannot be altered."

"Tell me what has gone wrong, Marston. Is it in money matters? If it is, I know I can help you there."

"Money. Oh! dear, no;" said Marston. "Charley, you are a good fellow. You are the best fellow I ever met, do you know? But I can't tell you what is the matter now."

"Have I been doing anything?" said Charles eagerly.

"You have been doing a great deal to make me like and respect you, Charles; but nothing to make me unhappy. Now, answer me some questions, and let us change the subject. How is your father?"

"Dear old dad is very well. I got a letter from him to-day."

"And how is your brother?"

"Well in health, but weak in mind, I fear. I am very much afraid that I shall be heir of Ravenshoe."

"Why? is he going mad?"

"Not a bit of it, poor lad. He is going into a religious house, I am afraid. At least he mentioned that sort of thing the last time he wrote to me, as if he was trying to bring me face to face with the idea; and be sure my dearly beloved Father Mackworth will never let the idea rest."

"Poor fellow! And how is Adelaide the beautiful?"

"*She's* all right," said Charles. "She and Aunt are the best friends in the world."

"They always were, weren't they?"

"Why, you see," said Charles, "sometimes Aunt was cross, and Adelaide is very high-spirited, you know. Exceedingly high-spirited."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, yes, very much so; she didn't take much nonsense from Lady Hainault, I can tell you."

"Well," said Marston, "to continue my catechizing, how is William?"

"He is very well. Is there no one else you were going to ask after?"

"Oh, yes. Miss Corby?"

"She is pretty well, I believe, in health, but she does not seem quite so happy as she was," said Charles, looking at Marston, suddenly.

He might as well have looked at the Taylor building, if he expected any change to take place in Marston's face. He regarded him with a stony stare, and said—

"Indeed. I am sorry to hear that."

"Marston," said Charles, "I once thought that there was something between you and her."

"That is a remarkable instance of what silly notions get into vacant minds," said Marston steadily. Whereat Charles laughed again.

At this point, being opposite the University barge, Charles was hailed by a West-countryman of Exeter, whom we shall call Lee, who never met with Charles without having a turn at talking Devonshire with him. He now began at the top of his voice, to the great astonishment of the surrounding dandies.

"Where be gwine? Charles Ravenshoe, where be gwine?"

"We'm gwine for a ride on the watter, Jan Lee."

"Be gwine in the Varsity eight, Charles Ravenshoe?"

"Iss, sure."

"How do'e feel? Dont'e feel afeard?"

"Ma dear soul, I've got such a wambling in my innards, and—"

"We are waiting for you, Ravenshoe," said the Captain; and, a few minutes after, the University eight rushed forth on her glorious career, clearing her way through the crowd of boats, and their admiring rowers, towards Iffley.

And Marston sat on the top of the University barge, and watched her sweeping on towards the distance, and then he said to himself—

"Ah! there goes the man I like best in the world, who don't care for the woman I love best in the world, who is in love with the man before mentioned, who is in love with a woman who don't care a hang for him. There is a certain left-handedness in human affairs."

CHAPTER XXIII.[1]

THE LAST GLIMPSE OF THE OLD WORLD.

PUTNEY Bridge at half an hour before high tide; thirteen or fourteen steamers; five or six thousand boats, and fifteen or twenty thousand spectators. This is the morning of the great University race, about which every member of the two great Universities, and a very large section of the general public, have been fidgeting and talking for a month or so.

The bridge is black, the lawns are black, every balcony and window in the town is black; the steamers are black with a swarming, eager multitude, come to see the picked youths of the upper class try their strength against one another. There are two friends of ours nearly concerned in the great event of the day. Charles is rowing three in the Oxford boat, and Marston is steering. This is a memorable day for both of them, and more especially for poor Charles.

Now the crowd surges to and fro, and there is a cheer. The men are getting into their boats. The

[1] The short description of the University boat-race which begins this chapter was written two years ago, from the author's recollections of the race of 1852. It would do for a description of this year's race, quite as well as of any other year, substituting "Cambridge" for "Oxford," according to the year.

police-boats are busy clearing the course. Now there is a cheer of admiration. Cambridge dashes out, swings round, and takes her place at the bridge.

Another shout. Oxford sweeps majestically out and takes her place by Cambridge. Away go the police-galleys, away go all the London club-boats, at ten miles an hour down the course. Now the course is clear, and there is almost a silence.

Then a wild hubbub; and people begin to squeeze and crush against one another. The boats are off; the fight has begun; then the thirteen steamers come roaring on after them, and their wake is alive once more with boats.

Everywhere a roar and a rushing to and fro. Frantic crowds upon the towing-path, mad crowds on the steamers, which make them sway and rock fearfully. Ahead Hammersmith Bridge, hanging like a black bar, covered with people as with a swarm of bees. As an eye-piece to the picture, two solitary flying-boats, and the flashing oars, working with the rapidity and regularity of a steam-engine.

"Who's in front?" is asked by a thousand mouths; but who can tell? We shall see soon. Hammersmith Bridge is stretching across the water not a hundred yards in front of the boats. For one half-second a light shadow crosses the Oxford boat, and then it is out into the sunlight beyond. In another second the same shadow crosses the Cambridge boat. Oxford is ahead.

The men with light-blue neckties say that, "By

George, Oxford can't keep that terrible quick stroke going much longer;" and the men with dark-blue ties say, "Can't she, by Jove!" Well, we shall know all about it soon, for here is Barnes Bridge. Again the shadow goes over the Oxford boat, and then one, two, three, four seconds before the Cambridge men pass beneath it. Oxford is winning! There is a shout from the people at Barnes, though the πολλοὶ don't know why. Cambridge has made a furious rush, and drawn nearly up to Oxford; but it is useless. Oxford leaves rowing, and Cambridge rows ten strokes before they are level. Oxford has won!

Five minutes after, Charles was on the wharf in front of the Ship Inn at Mortlake, as happy as a king. He had got separated from his friends in the crowd, and the people round him were cheering him, and passing flattering remarks on his personal appearance, which caused Charles to laugh, and blush, and bow, as he tried to push through his good-natured persecutors, when he suddenly, in the midst of a burst of laughter caused by a remark made by a drunken bargeman, felt somebody clasp his arm, and turning round, saw William.

He felt such a shock that he was giddy and faint. "Will!" he said, "what is the matter?"

"Come here, and I'll tell you."

He forced his way to a quieter place, and then turned round to his companion,—"Make it short, Will; that's a dear fellow. I can stand the worst."

"Master was took very bad two days ago, Master

Charles; and Master Cuthbert sent me off for you at once. He told me directly I got to Paddington to ask for a telegraph-message, so that you might hear the last accounts; and here it is."

He put what we now call a "telegram" into Charles's hand, and the burden of it was mourning and woe. Densil Ravenshoe was sinking fast, and all that steam and horse-flesh could do would be needed, if Charles would see him alive.

"Will, go and find Mr. Marston for me, and I will wait here for you. How are we to get back to Putney?"

"I have got a cab waiting."

William dashed into the inn, and Charles waited. He turned and looked at the river.

There it was winding away past villa and park, bearing a thousand boats upon its bosom. He looked once again upon the crowded steamers and the busy multitude, and even in his grief felt a rush of honest pride as he thought that he was one of the heroes of the day. And then he turned, for William was beside him again. Marston was not to be found.

"I should like to have seen him again," he said; "but we must fly, Will, we must fly!"

Had he known under what circumstances he was next to see a great concourse of people, and under what circumstances he was next to meet Marston, who knows but that in his ignorance and short-sightedness he would have chosen to die where he stood in such a moment of triumph and honour?

In the hurry of departure he had no time to ask questions. Only when he found himself in the express train, having chosen to go second-class with his servant, and not be alone, did he find time to ask how it had come about.

There was but little to be told. Densil had been seized after breakfast, and at first so slightly that they were not much alarmed. He had been put to bed, and the symptoms had grown worse. Then William had been despatched for Charles, leaving Cuthbert, Mary, and Father Mackworth at his bedside. All had been done that could be done. He seemed to be in no pain, and quite contented. That was all. The telegraph told the rest. Cuthbert had promised to send horses to Crediton, and a relay forty miles nearer home.

The terrible excitement of the day, and the fact that he had eaten nothing since breakfast, made Charles less able to bear up against the news than he would otherwise have been. Strange thoughts and fears began to shape themselves in his head, and to find voices in the monotonous jolting of the carriage.

Not so much the fear of his father's death. That he did not fear, because he knew it would come; and, as to that, the bitterness of death was past, bitter, deeply bitter, as it was: but a terror lest his father should die without speaking to him—that he should never see those dear lips wreathe into a smile for him any more.

Yesterday he had been thinking of this very journey —of how, if they won the race, he would fly down on

the wings of the wind to tell them, and how the old man would brighten up with joy at the news. Yesterday he was a strong, brave man; and now what deadly terror was this at his heart?

"William, what frightens me like this?"

"The news I brought you, and the excitement of the race. And you have been training hard for a long time, and that don't mend a man's nerves; and you are hungry."

"Not I."

"What a noble race it was! I saw you above a mile off. I could tell the shape of you that distance, and see how you was pulling your oar through. I knew that my boy was going to be in the winning boat, Lord bless you! before the race was rowed. And when I saw Mr. C—— come in with that tearing, licking quick stroke of his, I sung out for old Oxford, and pretty nearly forgot the photograph for a bit."

"Photograph, Will? what photograph?"

"Telegraph, I mean. It's all the same."

Charles couldn't talk, though he tried. He felt an anxiety he had never felt before. It was so ill-defined that he could not trace it to its source. He had a right to feel grief, and deep anxiety to see his father alive; but this was sheer terror, and at what?

At Swindon, William got out and returned laden with this and with that, and forced Charles to eat and drink. He had not tasted wine for a long time; so he had to be careful with it; but it seemed to do him no good.

But, at last, tired nature did something for him, and he fell asleep.

When he awoke it was night, and at first he did not remember where he was. But rapidly his grief came upon him; and up, as it were out of a dark gulf, came the other nameless terror and took possession of his heart.

There was a change at Exeter; then at Crediton they met with their first relay of horses, and, at ten o'clock at night, after a hasty supper, started on their midnight ride. The terror was gone the moment Charles was on horseback.

The road was muddy and dark, often with steep banks on each side; but a delicious April moon was over head, and they got on bravely. At Bow there was a glimpse of Dartmoor towering black, and a fresh puff of westerly wind, laden with scents of spring. At Hatherleigh, there were fresh horses, and one of the Ravenshoe grooms waiting for them. The man had heard nothing since yesterday; so at one o'clock they started on again. After this, there were none but cross-country roads, and dangerous steep lanes; so they got on slowly. Then came the morning with voice of ten thousand birds, and all the rich perfume of awaking nature. And then came the woods of home, and they stood on the terrace, between the old house and the sea.

The white surf was playing and leaping around the quiet headlands; the sea-birds were floating merrily in

the sunshine; the April clouds were racing their purple shadows across the jubilant blue sea; but the old house stood blank and dull. Every window was closed, and not a sound was heard.

For Charles had come too late. Densil Ravenshoe was dead.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE NEW WORLD.

In the long dark old room with the mullioned windows looking out on the ocean, in the room that had been Charles's bed-room, study, and play-room, since he was a boy, there sat Charles Ravenshoe, musing, stricken down with grief, and forlorn.

There were the fishing rods and the guns, there were the books and the homely pictures in which his soul had delighted. There was "The Sanctuary and the Challenge," and Bob Coombes in his outrigger. All were there. But Charles Ravenshoe was not there. There was another man in his place, bearing his likeness, who sat and brooded with his head on his hands.

Where was the soul which was gone? Was he an infant in a new cycle of existence? or was he still connected with the scenes and people he had known and loved so long? Was he present? Could he tell at last the deep love that one poor foolish heart had borne for him? Could he know now the deep, deep grief that tore that poor silly heart, because its owner had not been by to see the last faint smile of intelligence flutter over features that he was to see no more?"

"Father! Father! Where are you. Don't leave me

all alone, father." No answer! only the ceaseless beating of the surf upon the shore.

He opened the window, and looked out. The terrace, the woods, the village, and beyond the great unmeasureable ocean! What beyond that?

What was this death, which suddenly made that which we loved so well, so worthless? Could they none of them tell us? One there was who triumphed over death and the grave, and was caught up in His earthly body. Who is this Death that he should triumph over us? Alas, poor Charles! There are evils worse than death. There are times when death seems to a man like going to bed. Wait!

There was a picture of Mary's, of which he bethought himself. One we all know. Of a soul being carried away by angels to heaven. They call it St. Catherine, though it had nothing particular to do with St. Catherine, that I know of; and he thought he would go see it. But, as he turned, there stood Mary herself before him.

He held out his hands towards her, and she came and sat beside him, and put her arm round his neck. He kissed her! Why not? They were as brother and sister.

He asked her why she had come.

"I knew you wanted me," she said.

Then she, still with her arm round his neck, talked to him about what had just happened. "He asked for you soon after he was taken on the first day, and told Father Mackworth to send off for you. Cuthbert had

sent two hours before, and he said he was glad, and hoped that Oxford would win the race——"

"Charles," said Mary again, "do you know that old James has had a fit, and is not expected to live?"

"No."

"Yes, as soon as he heard of our dear one's death he was taken. It has killed him."

"Poor old James!"

They sat there some time, hand in hand, in sorrowful communion, and then Charles said suddenly—

"The future, Mary? The future, my love?"

"We discussed that before, Charles, dear. There is only one line of life open to me."

"Ah!"

"I shall write to Lady Ascot to-morrow. I heard from Adelaide the other day, and she tells me that young Lady Hainault is going to take charge of poor Lord Charles's children in a short time; and she will want a nursery governess; and I will go."

"I would sooner you were there than here, Mary. I am very glad of this. She is a very good woman. I will go and see you there very often."

"Are you going back to Oxford, Charles?"

"I think not."

"Do you owe much money there?"

"Very little, now. He paid it almost all for me."

"What shall you do?"

"I have not the remotest idea. I cannot possibly conceive. I must consult Marston."

There passed a weary week—a week of long brooding days and sleepless nights, while outside the darkened house the bright spring sun flooded all earth with light and life, and the full spring wind sang pleasantly through the musical woods, and swept away inland over heather and crag.

Strange sounds began to reach Charles in his solitary chamber; sounds which at first made him fancy he was dreaming, they were so mysterious and inexplicable. The first day they assumed the forms of solitary notes of music, some almost harsh, and some exquisitely soft and melodious. As the day went on they began to arrange themselves into chords, and sound slightly louder, though still a long way off. At last, near midnight, they seemed to take form, and flow off into a wild, mournful piece of music, the like of which Charles had never heard before; and then all was still.

Charles went to bed, believing either that the sounds were supernatural or that they arose from noises in his head. He came to the latter conclusion, and thought sleep would put an end to them; but, next morning, when he had half opened the shutters, and let in the blessed sunlight, there came the sound again—a wild, rich, triumphant melody, played by some hand, whether earthly or unearthly, that knew its work well.

"What is that, William?"

"Music."

"Where does it come from?"

"Out of the air. The pixies make such music at

times. Maybe it's the saints in glory with their golden harps, welcoming Master and Father."

"Father!".

"He died this morning at daybreak; not long after his old master, eh? He was very faithful to him. He was in prison with him once, I've heard tell. I'll be as faithful to you, Charles, when the time comes."

And another day wore on in the darkened house, and still the angelic music rose and fell at intervals, and moved the hearts of those that heard it strangely.

"Surely," said Charles to himself, "that music must sound louder in one place than another." And then he felt himself smiling at the idea that he half believed it to be supernatural.

He rose and passed on through corridor and gallery, still listening as he went. The music had ceased, and all was still.

He went on through parts of the house he had not been in since a boy. This part of the house was very much deserted; some of the rooms he looked into were occupied as inferior servants' bed-rooms; some were empty, and all were dark. Here was where he, Cuthbert, and William would play hide-and-seek on wet days; and well he remembered each nook and lair. A window was open in one empty room, and it looked into the court-yard. They were carrying things into the chapel, and he walked that way.

In the dark entrance to the dim chapel a black figure stood aside to let him pass; he bowed, and did so, but

was barely in the building when a voice he knew said, "It is Charles," and the next moment he was clasped by both hands, and the kind face of Father Tiernay was beaming before him.

"I'm so glad to see you, Father Tiernay. It is so kind of you to come."

"You look pale and worn," said the good man; "you have been fretting. I won't have that, now that I am come. I will have you out in the air and sunshine, my boy, along the shore——"

The music again! Not faint and distant as heretofore, but close overhead, crashing out into a mighty jubilate, which broke itself against rafter and window in a thousand sweet echoes. Then, as the noble echoes began to sink, there arose a soft flute-like note, which grew more intense until the air was filled with passionate sound; and it trilled and ran, and paused, and ran on, and died you knew not where.

"I can't stand much of that, Father Tiernay," said Charles. "They have been mending the organ, I see. That accounts for the music I have heard. I suppose there will be music at the funeral, then."

"My brother Murtagh," said Father Tiernay, "came over yesterday morning from Lord Segur's. He is organist there, and he mended it. Bedad he is a sweet musician. Hear what Sir Henry Bishop says of him."

There came towards them, from the organ-loft, a young man, wearing a long black coat and black bands with white edges, and having of his own one of the sweetest,

kindliest faces eye ever rested on. Father Tiernay looked on him with pride and affection, and said—

"Murty, me dear brother, this is Mr. Charles Ravenshoe, me very good friend, I hope you'll become acquaintances, for the reason that two good fellows should know one another."

"I am almost afraid," said the young man, with a frank smile, "that Charles Ravenshoe has already a prejudice against me for the disagreeable sounds I was making all day yesterday in bringing the old organ into work again."

"Nay, I was only wondering where such noble bursts of melody came from," said Charles. "If you had made all the evil noises in Pandemonium, they would have been forgiven for that last piece of music. Do you know that I had no idea the old organ could be played on. Years ago, when we were boys, Cuthbert and I tried to play on it; I blew for him, and he sounded two or three notes, but it frightened us, and we ran away, and never went near it again."

"It is a beautiful old instrument," said young Tiernay; "will you stand just here, and listen to it?"

Charles stood in one of the windows, and Father Tiernay beside him. He leant his head on his arm, and looked forth eastward and northward, over the rolling woods, the cliffs, and the bright blue sea.

The music began with a movement soft, low, melodious, beyond expression, and yet strong, firm, and regular as of a thousand armed men marching to victory.

It grew in volume and power till it was irresistible, yet still harmonious and perfect. Charles understood it. It was the life of a just man growing towards perfection and honour.

It wavered and fluttered, and threw itself into sparkling sprays and eddies. It leapt and laughed with joy unutterable, yet still through all the solemn measure went on. Love had come to gladden the perfect life, and had adorned without disturbing it.

Then began discords and wild sweeping storms of sound, harsh always, but never unmelodious; fainter and fainter grew the melody, till it was almost lost. Misfortunes had come upon the just man, and he was bending under them.

No. More majestic, more grand, more solemn than ever the melody reasserted itself: and again, as though purified by a furnace, marched solemnly on with a clearness and sweetness greater that at first. The just man had emerged from his sea of troubles ennobled. Charles felt a hand on his shoulder. He thought it had been Father Tiernay. Father Tiernay was gone. It was Cuthbert.

"Cuthbert! I am so glad you have come to see me. I was not surprised because you would not see me before. You didn't think I was offended, brother, did you? I know you. I know you!"

Charles smoothed his hair and smiled pleasantly upon him. Cuthbert stood quite still and said nothing.

"Cuthbert," said Charles, "you are in pain. In bodily pain I mean."

"I am. I spent last night on these stones praying, and the cold has got into my very bones."

"You pray for the dead, I know," said Charles. "But why destroy the health God has given you because a good man has gone to sleep?"

"I was not praying for him so much as for you."

"God knows I want it, dear Cuthbert. But can you benefit me by killing yourself?"

"Who knows? I may try. How long is it since we were boys together, Charles?"

"How long? Let me see. Why, it is nineteen years at least since I can first remember you."

"I have been sarcastic and distant with you sometimes, Charles, but I have never been unkind."

"Cuthbert! I never had an unkind word or action from you. Why do you say this?"

"Because——Charles, do you remember the night the *Warren Hastings* came ashore?"

"Ay," said Charles wonderingly.

"In future, when you call me to mind, will you try to think of me as I was then, not as I have been lately. We slept together, you remember, through the storm, and he sat on the bed. God has tried me very hard. Let us hope that heaven will be worth the winning. After this you will see me no more in private. Good-bye!"

Charles thought he knew what he meant, and had expected it. He would not let him go for a time.

CHAPTER XXV.

FATHER MACKWORTH BRINGS LORD SALTIRE TO BAY, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

OLD James was to be buried side by side with his old master in the vault under the altar. The funeral was to be on the grandest scale, and all the Catholic gentry of the neighbourhood, and most of the Protestant, were coming. Father Mackworth, it may be conceived, was very busy, and seldom alone. All day he and the two Tiernays were arranging and ordering. When thoroughly tired out, late at night, he would retire to his room and take a frugal supper (Mackworth was no glutton) and sit before the fire musing.

One night, towards the middle of the week, he was sitting thus before the fire when the door opened, and some one came in; thinking it was the servant, he did not look round; but, when the supposed servant came up to the fire-place and stood still, he cast his eyes suddenly up, and they fell upon the cadaverous face of Cuthbert.

He looked deadly pale and wan as he stood with his face turned to the flickering fire, and Mackworth felt deep pity for him. He held an open letter towards Mackworth, and said—

"This is from Lord Saltire. He proposes to come here the night before the funeral and go away in Lord Segur's carriage with him after it is over. Will you kindly see after his rooms, and so on? Here is the letter."

"I will," said Mackworth. "My dear boy, you look deadly ill."

"I wish I were dead."

"So do all who hope for heaven," said Mackworth.

"Who would not look worn and ill with such a scene hanging over their heads?"

"Go away and avoid it."

"Not I. A Ravenshoe is not a coward. Besides, I want to see him again. How cruel you have been! Why did you let him gain my heart? I have little enough to love."

There was a long pause—so long that a bright-eyed little mouse ran out from the wainscot and watched. Both their eyes were bent on the fire, and Father Mackworth listened with painful intentness for what was to come.

"He shall speak first," he thought. "How I wonder——"

At last Cuthbert spoke slowly, without raising his eyes—

"Will nothing induce you to forego your purpose?"

"How can I forego it, Cuthbert, with common honesty? I have foregone it long enough."

"Listen now," said Cuthbert unheedingly; "I have

been reckoning up what I can afford, and I find that I can give you five thousand pounds down for that paper, and five thousand more in bills of six, eight, and twelve months. Will that content you?"

Father Mackworth would have given a finger to have answered promptly "No," but he could not. The offer was so astounding, so unexpected, that he hesitated long enough to make Cuthbert look round, and say—

"Ten thousand pounds is a large sum of money, Father."

It was, indeed; and Lord Saltire coming next week! Let us do the man justice; he acted with a certain amount of honour. When you have read this book to the end you will see that ten thousand pounds was only part of what was offered to him. He gave up it all because he would not lower himself in the eyes of Cuthbert, who had believed in him so long.

"I paused," said he, "from astonishment, that a gentleman could have insulted me by such a proposition."

"Your pause," said Cuthbert, "arose from hesitation, not from astonishment. I saw your eyes blaze when I made you the offer. Think of ten thousand pounds. You might appear in the world as an English Roman Catholic of fortune. Good heavens! with your talent, you might aspire to the cardinal's chair!"

"No, no, no!" said Mackworth, fiercely. "I did hesitate, and I have lied to you; but I hesitate no

longer. I won't have the subject mentioned to me again, sir. What sort of a gentleman are you to come to men's rooms in the dead of night, with your father lying dead in the house, and tempt men to felony? I will not."

"God knows," said Cuthbert, as he passed out, "whether I have lost heaven by trying to save him."

Mackworth heard the door close behind him, and then looked eagerly towards it. He heard Cuthbert's footsteps die along the corridor, and then, rising up, he opened it and looked out. The corridor was empty. He walked hurriedly back to the fireplace.

"Shall I call him back?" he said. "It is not too late. Ten thousand pounds! A greater stake than I played for; and now, when it is at my feet, I am throwing it away. And for what? For honour, after I have acted the——" (he could not say the word). "After I have gone so far. I must be a gentleman. A common rogue would have jumped at the offer. By heaven! there are some things better than money. If I were to take his offer he would know me for a rogue. And I love the lad. No, no! let the fool go to his prayers. I will keep the respect of one man at least.

"What a curious jumble and puzzle it all is, to be sure. Am I any worse than my neighbours? I have made a desperate attempt at power, for a name, and an ambition; and then, because the ball comes suddenly at my feet, from a quarter I did not expect, I dare not strike it because I fear the contempt of one single pair

of eyes from which I have been used to receive nothing but love and reverence.

"Yet, he cannot trust me, as I thought he did, or he would not have made the offer to me. And then he made it in such a confident way that he must have thought I was going to accept it. That is strange. He has never rebelled lately. Am I throwing away substance for shadow? I have been bound to the Church body and soul from my boyhood, and I must go on. I have refused a cardinal's chair this night. But who will ever know it?

"I must go about with my lord Saltire. I could go at him with more confidence if I had ten thousand pounds in the bank though, in case of a failure. I am less afraid of that terrible old heretic than I am of those great eyes of Cuthbert's turned on me in scorn. I have lived so long among gentlemen that I believe myself to be one. He knows, and he shall tell.

"And, if all fails, I have served the Church, and the Church shall serve me. What fools the best of us are! Why did I ever allow that straightforward idiot Tiernay into the house? He hates me, I know. I rather like the fool. He will take the younger one's part on Monday; but I don't think my gentleman will dare to say too much."

After this soliloquy, the key to which will appear very shortly, Father Mackworth took off his clothes and got into bed.

The day before the funeral, Cuthbert sent a mes-

sage to Charles, to beg that he would be kind enough to receive Lord Saltire; and, as the old man was expected at a certain hour, Charles, about ten minutes before the time, went down to the bottom of the hall-steps on to the terrace, to be ready for him when he came.

Oh the glorious wild freshness of the sea and sky after the darkened house! The two old capes right and left; the mile-long stretch of sand between them; and the short crisp waves rolling in before the westerly wind of spring! Life and useful action in the rolling water; budding promise in the darkening woods; young love in every bird's note!

William stood beside him before he had observed him. Charles turned to him, and took his arm in his.

"Look at this," he said.

"I am looking at it."

"Does it make you glad and wild?" said Charles. "Does it make the last week in the dark house look like twenty years? Are the two good souls which are gone looking at it now, and rejoicing that earth should still have some pleasure left for us?"

"I hope not," said William, turning to Charles.

"And why?" said Charles, wondering rather what William would say.

"I wouldn't," said William, "have neither of their hearts broke with seeing what is to come."

"Their hearts broke!" said Charles, turning full round on his foster-brother. "Let them see how we

behave under it, William. That will never break their hearts, my boy."

"Charles," said William, earnestly, "do you know what is coming?"

"No; nor care."

"It is something terrible for you, I fear," said William.

"Have you any idea what it is?" said Charles.

"Not the least. But look here. Last night, near twelve, I went down to the chapel, thinking to say an ave before the coffin, and there lay Master Cuthbert on the stones. So I kept quiet and said my prayer. And of a sudden he burst out and said, 'I have risked my soul and my fortune to save him: Lord, remember it!'"

"Did he say that, William?"

"The very words."

"Then he could not have been speaking of me," said Charles. "It is possible that by some means I may not come into the property I have been led to expect; but that could not have referred to me. Suppose I was to leave the house, penniless, to-morrow morning, William, should I go alone? I am very strong, and very patient, and soon learn anything. Cuthbert would take care of me. Would you come with me, or let me go alone?"

"You know. Why should I answer?"

"We might go to Canada and settle. And then Adelaide would come over when the house was ready; and you would marry the girl of your choice; and our boys would grow up to be such friends as you and I

are. And then my boy should marry your girl, and——"

Poor, dreaming Charles, all unprepared for what was to come!

A carriage drove on to the terrace at this moment, with Lord Saltire's solemn servant on the box.

Charles and William assisted Lord Saltire to alight. His lordship said that he was getting devilish stiff and old, and had been confoundedly cut up by his old friend's death, and had felt bound to come down to show his respect to the memory of one of the best and honestest men it had ever been his lot to meet in a tolerably large experience. And then, standing on the steps, went on—

"It is very pleasant to me to be greeted by a face I like as yours, Charles. I was gratified at seeing your name in the *Times* as being one of the winners of that great boat-race the other day. My man pointed it out to me. That sort of thing is very honourable to a young fellow, if it does not lead to a neglect of other duties, in which case it becomes very mischievous; in yours it has not. That young man is, I believe, your foster-brother. Will he be good enough to go and find Miss Corby, and tell her that Lord Saltire wants her to come and walk with him on the terrace? Give me your shoulder." William ran right willingly on his errand.

"Your position here, Charles," continued Lord Saltire, "will be a difficult one."

"It will, indeed, my Lord."

"I intend you to spend most of your time with me in future. I want some one to take care of me. In return for boring you all day, I shall get you the run of all the best houses, and make a man of you. Hush! not a word now! Here comes our Robin Redbreast. I am glad I have tempted her out into the air and the sunshine. How peaked you look, my dear! How are you?"

Poor Mary looked pale and wan, indeed, but brightened up at the sight of her old friend. They three walked and talked in the fresh spring morning an hour or more.

That afternoon came a servant to Lord Saltire with a note from Father Mackworth, requesting the honour of ten minutes' conversation with Lord Saltire in private.

"I suppose I must see the fellow," said the old man to himself.

"My compliments to Mr. Mackworth, and I am alone in the library. The fool," continued he, when the man had left the room, "why doesn't he let well alone? I hate the fellow. I believe he is as treacherous as his mother. If he broaches the subject, he shall have the whole truth."

Meanwhile, Father Mackworth was advancing towards him through the dark corridors, and walking slower, and yet more slow, as he neared the room where sat the grim old man. He knew that there would be a fencing match; and of all the men in broad England he feared his lordship most. His determination held, however; though, up to the very last, he had almost deter-

mined to speak only about comparatively indifferent subjects, and not about that nearest to his heart.

"How do you do, my good sir?" said Lord Saltire, as he came in; "I have to condole with you on the loss of our dear old friend. We shall neither of us ever have a better one, sir."

Mackworth uttered some common-places; to which Lord Saltire bowed, without speaking, and then sat with his elbows on the arms of his chair, making a triangle of his two fore fingers and thumbs, staring at Father Mackworth.

"I am going, Lord Saltire, to trouble you with some of my early reminiscences as a boy."

Lord Saltire bowed, and settled himself easily in his chair, as one does who expects a good story. Mackworth went on—

"One of my earliest recollections, my lord, is of being at a French lycée."

"The fault of those establishments," said Lord Saltire, pensively, "is the great range of subjects which are superficially taught. I ask pardon for interrupting you. Do you take snuff?"

Mackworth declined, with great politeness, and continued—

"I was taken to that school by a footman in livery."

"Upon my honour, then, I owe you an apology. I thought, of course, that the butler had gone with you. But, in a large house, one never really knows what one's people are about."

Father Mackworth did not exactly like this. It was perfectly evident to him, not only that Lord Saltire knew all about his birth and parentage, but also was willing to tell.

"Lord Saltire," he said, "I have never had a parent's care, or any name but one I believe to be fictitious. You can give me a name—give me, perhaps, a parent—possibly, a brother. Will you do this for me?"

"I can do neither the one thing nor the other, my good sir. I entreat you, for your own sake, to inquire no further."

There was a troubled expression in the old man's face as he answered. Mackworth thought he was gaining his point, and pressed on.

"Lord Saltire, as you are a gentleman, tell me who my parents were;" and, as he said this, he rose up and stood before him, folding his arms.

"Confound the impudent, theatrical jackanapes!" thought Lord Saltire. "His mother all over. I will gratify your curiosity, sir," he said aloud, angrily. "You are the illegitimate son of a French ballet-dancer!"

"But who was my father, my lord? Answer me that, on your honour."

"Who was your father? *Pardieu*, that is far more than I can tell. If any one ever knew, it must have been your mother. You are assuming a tone with me, sir, which I don't intend to put up with. I wished to spare you a certain amount of humiliation. I shall not trouble myself to do so now, for many reasons. Now

listen to me, sir—to the man who saved you from the kennel, sir—and drop that theatrical attitude. Your mother was my brother's mistress, and a clever woman in her way; and meeting her here and there, in the green-room and where not, and going sometimes to her house with my brother, I had a sort of acquaintance with her, and liked her as one likes a clever brilliant woman of that sort. My brother died. Some time after your mother fell into poverty and disgrace under circumstances into which I should advise you not to inquire, and on her death-bed recommended you to my care as an old acquaintance, praying that you might be brought up in her own religion. The request was, under the circumstances, almost impudent; but, remembering that I had once liked the woman, and calling to mind the relation she had held towards poor dear John, I complied, and did for you what I have done. You were a little over a twelvemonth old at the time of your mother's death, and my brother had been dead nearly or quite five years. Your mother had changed her protector thrice during that time. Now, sir!"

Mackworth stood before Lord Saltire all this time as firm as a rock. He had seen from the old man's eye that every word was terribly true, but he had never flinched—never a nerve in his face had quivered; but he had grown deadly pale. When Lord Saltire had finished he tried to speak, but found his mouth as dry as dust. He smiled, and, with a bow, reaching past Lord Saltire, took up a glass of lemonade which stood

at his elbow and drank it. Then he spoke clearly and well.

"You see how you have upset me, my lord. In seeking this interview I had some hopes of having forced a confession from your lordship of my relationship with you, and thereby serving my personal ambition. I have failed. It now remains to me to thank you heartily and frankly for the benefits I have received from you, and to beg you to forgive my indiscretion."

"You are a brave man, sir," said Lord Saltire. "I don't think you are an honest one. But I can respect manliness."

"You have a great affection for Charles Ravenshoe, my lord."

"Yes," said Lord Saltire; "I love Charles Ravenshoe more than any other human being."

"Perhaps the time may come, my lord, when he will need all your love and protection."

"Highly possible. I am in possession of the tenor of his father's will; and those who try to set that will aside, unless they have a very strong case, had better consider that Charles is backed up by an amount of ready money sufficient to ruin the Ravenshoe estate in law.

"No attempt of the kind will be made, my lord. But I very much doubt whether your lordship will continue your protection to that young man. I wish you good afternoon."

"That fellow," said Lord Saltire, "has got a card to play which I don't know of. What matter? I can

adopt Charles, and he may defy them. I wish I could give him my title; but that will be extinct. I am glad little Mary is going to Lady Hainault. It will be the best place for her till she marries. I wish that fool of a boy had fallen in love with her. But he wouldn't."

Mackworth hurried away to his room; and, as he went, he said, "I have been a fool. A fool. I should have taken Cuthbert's offer. None but a fool would have done otherwise. A cardinal's chair thrown to the dogs!"

"I could not do it this morning; but I can do it now. The son of a figurante, and without a father. Perhaps he will offer it again."

"If he does not, there is one thing certain. That young ruffian Charles is ruined. Ah, ah! my lord Saltire, I have you there. I should like to see that old man's face when I play my last card. It will be a finer sight than Charles's. You'll make him your heir, will you, my lord? Will you make him your groom?".

He went to his desk, took out an envelope, and looked at it. He looked at it long, and then put it back. "It will never do to tempt him with it. If he were to refuse his offer of this morning, I should be ruined. Much better to wait and play out the ace boldly. I can keep my hold over *him;* and William is mine, body and soul, if he dies."

With which reflections the good Father dressed for dinner.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GRAND CRASH.

THE funeral was over. Charles had waited with poor weeping Mary to see the coffin carried away under the dark grim archway of the vault, and had tried to comfort her who would not be comforted. And, when the last wild wail of the organ had died away, and all the dark figures but they two had withdrawn from the chapel, there stood those two poor orphans alone together.

It was all over, and they began for the first time to realize it; they began to feel what they lost. King Densil was dead and King Cuthbert reigned. When a prime minister dies the world is shaken; when a county member dies the county is agitated, and the opposition electors, till lately insignificant, rise suddenly into importance, and the possible new members are suddenly great men. So, when a mere country gentleman dies, the head of a great family dies, relations are changed entirely between some score or so of persons. The dog of to-day is not the dog of yesterday. Servants are agitated, and remember themselves of old impertinences, and tremble. Farmers wonder what the new Squire's first move will be. Perhaps, even the old hound wonders whether he is to keep his old place by the fire or no, and younger brothers bite their nails and wonder too, about many things.

Charles wondered profoundly in his own room that afternoon, whither he retired after having dismissed Mary at her door with a kiss. In spite of his grief he wondered what was coming, and tried to persuade himself that he didn't care. From this state of mind he was aroused by William, who told him that Lord Segur was going and Lord Saltire with him, and that the latter wanted to speak to him.

Lord Saltire had his foot on the step of the carriage. "Charles, my dear boy," he said, "the moment things are settled come to me at Segur Castle. Lord Segur wants you to come and stay there while I am there."

Lord Segur from the carriage hoped Charles would come and see them at once.

"And mind, you know," said Lord Saltire, "that you don't do anything without consulting me. Let the little bird pack off to Lady Ascot's and help to blow up the grooms. Don't let her stay moping here. Now, good-bye, my dear boy. I shall see you in a day or so."

And so the old man was gone. And, as Charles watched the carriage, he saw the sleek grey head thrust from the window and the great white hand waved to him. He never forgot that glimpse of the grey head and the white hand, and he never will.

A servant came up to him, and asked him, Would he see Mr. Ravenshoe in the library? Charles answered Yes, but was in no hurry to go. So he stood a little longer on the terrace, watching the bright sea, and the gulls, and the distant island. Then he turned into the

darkened house again, and walked slowly towards the library door.

Some one else stood in the passage—it was William, with his hand on the handle of the door.

"I waited for you, Master Charles," he said; "they have sent for me too. Now you will hear something to your advantage.

"I care not," said Charles, and they went in.

Once, in lands far away, there was a sailor lad, a good-humoured, good-looking, thoughtless fellow, who lived alongside of me, and with whom I was always joking. We had a great liking for one another. I left him at the shaft's mouth at two o'clock one summer's day, roaring with laughter at a story I had told him; and at half-past five I was helping to wind up the shattered corpse, which when alive had borne his name. A flake of gravel had come down from the roof of the drive and killed him, and his laughing and story-telling were over for ever. How terrible these true stories are! Why do I tell this one? Because, whenever I think of this poor lad's death, I find myself not thinking of the ghastly thing that came swinging up out of the darkness into the summer air, but of the poor fellow as he was the morning before. I try to think how he looked, as leaning against the windlass with the forest behind and the mountains beyond, and if, in word or look, he gave any sign of his coming fate before he went gaily down into his tomb.

So it was with Charles Ravenshoe. He remembers

part of the scene that followed perfectly well; but he tries more than all to recall how Cuthbert looked, and how Mackworth looked before the terrible words were spoken. After it was all over he remembers, he tells me, every trifling incident well. But his memory is a little gone about the first few minutes which elapsed after he and William came into the room. He says that Cuthbert was sitting at the table very pale, with his hands clasped on the table before him, looking steadily at him without expression on his face; and that Mackworth leant against the chimney-piece, and looked keenly and curiously at him.

Charles went up silently and kissed his brother on the forehead. Cuthbert neither moved nor spoke. Charles greeted Mackworth civilly, and then leant against the chimney-piece by the side of him, and said what a glorious day it was. William stood at a little distance, looking uneasily from one to another.

Cuthbert broke silence. "I sent for you," he said.

"I am glad to come to you, Cuthbert, though I think you sent for me on business, which I am not very well up to to-day."

"On business," said Cuthbert; "business which must be gone through with to-day, though I expect it will kill me."

Charles, by some instinct (who knows what? it was nothing reasonable, he says) moved rapidly towards William, and laid his hand on his shoulder. I take it, that it arose from that curious gregarious feeling that

men have in times of terror. He could not have done better than to move towards his truest friend, whatever it was.

"I should like to prepare you for what is to come," continued Cuthbert, speaking calmly, with the most curious distinctness; "but that would be useless. The blow would be equally severe whether you expect it or not. You two who stand there were nursed at the same breast. That groom, on whose shoulder you have your hand now, is my real brother. You are no relation to me; you are the son of the faithful old servant whom we buried to-day with my father."

Charles said, Ho! like a great sigh. William put his arm round him, and, raising his finger, and looking into his face with his calm honest eyes, said with a smile—

"This was it, then. We know it all now."

Charles burst out into a wild laugh, and said, "Father Mackworth's ace of trumps! He has inherited a talent for melodrama from his blessed mother. Stop. I beg your pardon, sir, for saying that; I said it in a hurry. It was blackguardly. Let's have the proofs of this, and all that sort of thing, and witnesses too, if you please. Father Mackworth, there have been such things as prosecutions for conspiracy. I have Lord Saltire and Lord Ascot at my back. You have made a desperate cast, sir. My astonishment is that you have allowed your hatred for me to outrun your discretion so far. This matter will cost some money before it is settled."

Father Mackworth smiled, and Charles passed him, and rang the bell. Then he went back to William and took his arm.

"Fetch the Fathers Tiernay here immediately," said Charles to the servant who answered the bell.

In a few minutes the worthy priests were in the room. The group was not altered. Father Mackworth still leant against the mantel-piece, Charles and William stood together, and Cuthbert sat pale and calm with his hands clasped together.

Father Tiernay looked at the disturbed group and became uneasy. "Would it not be better to defer the settlement of any family disagreements to another day? On such a solemn occasion——"

"The ice is broken, Father Tiernay," said Charles. "Cuthbert, tell him what you have told me."

Cuthbert, clasping his hands together, did so, in a low, quiet voice.

"There," said Charles, turning to Father Tiernay, "what do you think of that?"

"I am so astounded and shocked that I don't know what to say," said Father Tiernay; "your mind must be abused, my dear sir. The likeness between yourself and Mr. Charles is so great that I cannot believe it. Mackworth, what have you to say to this?"

"Look at William, who is standing beside Charles," said the priest, quietly, "and tell me which of those two is most like Cuthbert."

"Charles and William are very much alike, certainly," said Tiernay; but——"

"Do you remember James Horton, Tiernay?" said Mackworth.

"Surely."

"Did you ever notice the likeness between him and Densil Ravenshoe?"

"I have noticed it, certainly; especially one night. One night I went to his cottage last autumn. Yes—well?"

"James Horton was Densil Ravenshoe's half-brother. He was the illegitimate son of Petre."

"Good God!"

"And the man whom you call Charles Ravenshoe, whom I call Charles Horton, is his son."

Charles was looking eagerly from one to the other, bewildered.

"Ask him, Father Tiernay," he said, "what proofs he has. Perhaps he will tell us."

"You hear what Mr. Charles says, Mackworth. I address you because you have spoken last. You must surely have strong proofs for such an astounding statement."

"I have his mother's handwriting," said Father Mackworth.

"My mother's, sir," said Charles, flushing up, and advancing a pace towards him.

"You forget who your mother was," said Mackworth.

"Your mother was Norah, James Horton's wife. She confessed the wicked fraud she practised to me, and has committed that confession to paper. I hold it. You have not a point of ground to stand on. Fifty Lord Saltires could not help you one jot. You must submit. You have been living in luxury and receiving an expensive education when you should have been cleaning out the stable. So far from being overwhelmed by this, you should consider how terribly the balance is against you."

He spoke with such awful convincing calmness that Charles's heart died away within him. He knew the man.

"Cuthbert," he said, "you are a gentleman. Is this true?"

"God knows how terribly true it is," said Cuthbert, quietly. Then there was a silence, broken by Charles in a strange thick voice, the like of which none there had heard before.

"I want to sit down somewhere. I want some drink. Will, my own boy, take this d——d thing from round my neck! I can't see; where is there a chair! Oh, God!"

He fell heavily against William, looking deadly white, without sense or power. And Cuthbert looked up at the priest, and said, in a low voice—

"You have killed him."

Little by little he came round again, and rose on his feet, looking round him as a buck or stag looks when run to soil, and is watching to see which dog will come,

with a piteous wild look, despairing and yet defiant. There was a dead silence.

"Are we to be allowed to see this paper?" said Charles, at length.

Father Mackworth immediately handed it to him, and he read it. It was completely conclusive. He saw that there was not a loophole to creep out of. The two Tiernays read it, and shook their heads. William read it and turned pale. And then they all stood staring blankly at one another.

"You see, sir," said Father Mackworth, "that there are two courses open to you. Either on the one hand, to acquiesce in the truth of this paper; or, on the other, to accuse me in a court of justice of conspiracy and fraud. If you were to be successful in the latter course, I should be transported out of your way, and the matter would end so. But any practical man would tell you, and you would see in your calmer moments, that no lawyer would undertake your case. What say you, Father Tiernay?"

"I cannot see what case he has, poor dear," said Father Tiernay. "Mackworth," he added, suddenly.

Father Mackworth met his eye with a steady stare, and Tiernay saw there was no hope of explanation there.

"On the other hand," continued Father Mackworth, "if this new state of things, is quietly submitted to (as it must be ultimately, whether quietly or otherwise you

yourself will decide), I am authorized to say that the very handsomest provision will be made for you, and that, to all intents and purposes, your prospects in the world will not suffer in the least degree. I am right in saying so, I believe, Mr. Ravenshoe?"

"You are perfectly right, sir," said Cuthbert, in a quiet, passionless voice. "My intention is to make a provision of three hundred a year for this gentleman, whom, till the last few days, I believed to be my brother. Less than four and twenty hours ago, Charles, I offered Father Mackworth ten thousand pounds for this paper, with a view to destroy it. I would, for your sake, Charles, have committed an act of villany which would have entailed a life's remorse, and have robbed William, my own brother, of his succession. You see what a poor weak rogue I am, and what a criminal I might become with a little temptation. Father Mackworth did his duty, and refused me. I tell you this to show you that he is, at all events, sincere enough in his conviction of the truth of this."

"You acted like yourself, Cuthbert. Like one who would risk body and soul for one you loved."

He paused; but they waited for him to speak again. And very calmly, in a very low voice, he continued—

"It is time that this scene should end. No one's interest will be served by continuing it. I want to say a very few words, and I want them to be considered as the words, as it were, of a dying man; for no one here

present will see me again till the day when I come back to claim a right to the name I have been bearing so long—and that day will be never."

Another pause. He moistened his lips, which were dry and cracked, and then went on—

"Here is the paper, Father Mackworth; and may the Lord of Heaven be judge between us if that paper be not true!"

Father Mackworth took it, and, looking him steadily in the face, repeated his words, and Charles's heart sank lower yet as he watched him, and felt that hope was dead.

"May the Lord of Heaven be judge between us two, Charles, if that paper be not true! Amen."

"I utterly refuse," Charles continued, "the assistance which Mr. Ravenshoe has so nobly offered. I go forth alone into the world to make my own way, or to be forgotten. Cuthbert and William, you will be sorry for a time, but not for long. You will think of me sometimes of dark winter nights when the wind blows, won't you? I shall never write to you, and shall never return here any more. Worse things than this have happened to men, and they have not died."

All this was said with perfect self-possession, and without a failure in the voice. It was magnificent despair. Father Tiernay, looking at William's face, saw there a sort of sarcastic smile, which puzzled him amazingly.

"I had better," said Charles, "make my will. I should like William to ride my horse Monté. He has thrown a curb, sir, as you know," he said, turning to William; "but he will serve you well, and I know you will be gentle with him."

William gave a short, dry laugh.

"I should have liked to take my terrier away with me, but I think I had better not. I want to have nothing with me to remind me of this place. My greyhound and the pointers I know you will take care of. It would please me to think that William had moved into my room, and had taken possession of all my guns, and fishing-rods, and so on. There is a double-barrelled gun left at Venables', in St. Aldate's, at Oxford, for repairs. It ought to be fetched away."

"Now, sir," he said, turning to Cuthbert, "I should like to say a few words about money matters. I owe about 150*l.* at Oxford. It was a great deal more at one time, but I have been more careful lately. I have the bills upstairs. If that could be paid——"

"To the utmost farthing, my dear Charles," said Cuthbert; "but——"

"Hush!" said Charles, "I have five and twenty pounds by me. May I keep that?"

"I will write you a check for five hundred. I shall move your resolution, Charles," said Cuthbert.

"Never, so help me God!" said Charles; "it only remains to say good-bye. I leave this room without a

hard thought towards any one in it. I am at peace with all the world. Father Mackworth, I beg your forgiveness. I have been often rude and brutal to you. I suppose that you always meant kindly to me. Goodbye."

He shook hands with Mackworth, then with the Tiernays; then he offered his hand to William, who took it smiling; and, lastly, he went up to Cuthbert, and kissed him on the cheek, and then walked out of the door into the hall.

William, as he was going, turned as though to speak to Cuthbert, but Cuthbert had risen, and he paused a moment.

Cuthbert had risen, and stood looking wildly about him, then he said, "Oh, my God, he is gone!" And then he broke through them, and ran out into the hall, crying, "Charles, Charles, come back. Only one more word, Charles." And then they saw Charles pause, and Cuthbert kneel down before him, calling him his own dear brother, and saying he would die for him. And then Father Tiernay hastily shut the library door, and left those two wild hearts out in the old hall together alone.

Father Tiernay came back to William, and took both his hands. "What are you going to do?" he said.

"I am going to follow him wherever he goes," said William. "I am never going to leave him again. If he goes to the world's end, I will be with him."

"Brave fellow!" said Tiernay. "If he goes from here, and is lost sight of, we may never see him again. If you go with him, you may change his resolution."

"That I shall never do," said William; "I know him too well. But I'll save him from what I am frightened to think of. I will go to him now. I shall see you again directly; but I must go to him."

He passed out into the hall. Cuthbert was standing alone, and Charles was gone.

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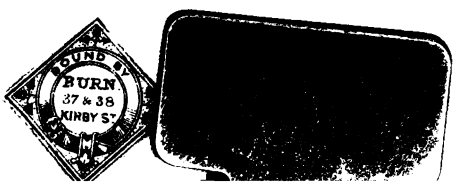
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